

Does Managerial Turnover Rate Impact Employee Motivation Within Irish Supermarkets?

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Abstract

Turnover in a firm is a problem with far reaching implications, as the loss of a staff member and the costs incurred in replacing them are a detriment to any firm. These negative impacts are even more prevalent when key roles, such as managers, in a firm experience turnover. The full breadth of the effects of turnover in these positions has yet to be defined, with research tending to focus on the leading factors of managerial turnover and its direct impact on performance. This view neglects to consider how a manager's staff specifically are impacted, which this paper seeks to determine. With a key role of a manager being to motivate their staff, this paper seeks to answer how in environments of varying turnover does staff motivation feel the impact of this phenomenon. Through surveying Irish supermarket employees, their total motivational levels can be measured and contrasted based on how many managers they've had over their tenure. This paper found a link suggesting that higher levels of managerial turnover yielded lower average motivation, highlighting an area researchers and businesses alike should be considering regarding their employees' motivation.

Declaration

Submission of Thesis and Dissertation

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(Thesis/Author Declaration Form)

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Table of Contents

<i>Abstract</i>	2
<i>Declaration</i>	3
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	4
<i>Introduction</i>	6
<i>Literature Review</i>	9
<i>Turnover</i>	9
<i>Negative Impact of Turnover</i>	10
<i>Positive Impact of Turnover</i>	13
<i>Research Question</i>	16
<i>Methodology</i>	18
<i>Overview and Population</i>	18
<i>Research Method</i>	18
<i>Collected Sample</i>	21
<i>Research Design</i>	25
<i>Data Analysis</i>	26
<i>Ethical Considerations</i>	26
<i>Limitations</i>	27
<i>Findings</i>	28
<i>Hypothesis 1</i>	29
<i>Hypothesis 2</i>	30
<i>Hypothesis 3</i>	31
<i>Additional Findings</i>	32
<i>Discussion</i>	37
<i>Theoretical Implications</i>	37
<i>Practical Implications</i>	38
<i>Future Studies</i>	39
<i>Conclusion</i>	41
<i>Bibliography</i>	42
<i>Appendix</i>	47

Introduction

The importance of a manager cannot be understated. Their role involves leading, communicating, motivating and much more, all of which is vital to the flow of business. Managers are thusly found across all sectors and businesses regardless of size and age. Irelands supermarket industry is one area where the necessity of a good manager is understood and accepted. Within these stores, multiple managers may be found, each over one or multiple departments and teams of various sizes. Ensuring the smooth operation of these large supermarkets can be challenging, as managers must juggle not only their specific roles tasks, but also liaise with their staff to ensure they also are working well and motivated. As such, finding a manager who can meet these needs can be a challenge, and they will be in high demand.

This can in turn give rise to managerial turnover; whether it be a manager cannot handle their role and steps down, they do well and move upward in the company, or are told they'd be better suited over another department and move laterally, this leaves a void where they once worked. This shift in leadership has been found to occur in various sectors and organisations, with the effects of it ranging from improved performance of staff as they try impress their new managers (Kleinknecht and Würtenberger, 2022) and better financial outcomes thanks to new thinking (Connolly, 2018), to the creation of gaps in knowledge between the new manager and old impacting their effectiveness (Revilla et al. 2019; Dess & Shaw 2001) as well as a negative impact on the turnover intention of employees who may have relied on their manager to deal with emotional burnout (Park et al., 2021). Despite this, there exists a gap in the current research into the existence of a link between managerial turnover and its impact on said managers employee's motivation, as well as in research regarding managerial turnover specifically within Ireland.

Refining this paper's approach to just the supermarket industry is intentional, as not only is retail stated to be emotionally labour intensive (Park et al., 2021) but motivation in this area already struggles, from factors such as the lingering impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in staffs minds (Valtorta et al., 2021), to the general dissatisfaction with pay levels (Shittu, 2008). In addition, turnover in the retail field for non-specialised stores in Ireland, which includes supermarkets, was found by the CSO (2023b) to be the highest of all firms operating within the retail trade in Ireland for 2020. This high level of staff turnover points further to the need for study into the motivational factors at play within Irelands supermarket industry and if/how managerial turnover plays a role in this. In very few industries does staff motivation come across so easily to consumers as it does in retail. Fields & Margavio, (1996) state how personnel in the retail field play a key role as their interactions with consumers can generate or reduce brand loyalty as well as impact word-of-mouth reputation among consumers. In today's society this is even more prevalent, with online reviews of even supermarkets being available, meaning having poorly motivated, dis-interested staff on a checkout could harm a business' reputation quickly as bad reviews flood in. This emphasises the importance of motivation within the supermarket industry, especially amongst entry level positions as these are generally the customer facing staff, owing to another reason a supermarket may wish to minimise any factors that could be impacting their staff's motivation.

The research being completed by this study may thusly aid not only the academic field through filling in this gap in the literature but may also prove to have far reaching practical implications for management, both within the supermarket industry and beyond. By surveying Irish supermarket employees and comparing their self-reported motivation levels, time spent in their company, number of managers, relationships, as well as demographic factors, relationships between these variables can be identified. For example, it could be shown that most employees only starting within this sector have high motivation which could decline with time; however, if this decline is less prevalent in those who have had less changes in managers for example, this could indicate that firms should strive to retain managers in their departments for longer. This is one example of the practical implications of these findings, though their do exist limitations with the selected methodological approach which will be discussed later.

From here the research question can emerge:

“Does managerial turnover rate impact employee motivation within Irish supermarkets?”

The answer to this question could provide further detail into what impacts employees’ motivations as well as highlight another factor firms must consider when considering things such as moving managers to new departments or up the career ladder. As previously stated, this relationship, if found to exist, is highly impactful in this sector and as such warrants extensive study.

Literature Review

Turnover

Turnover has long been studied and linked alongside the topic of motivation, with the consensus being that a negative relationship exists between motivation levels versus turnover intention, that meaning an employee's desire to leave their job typically increases as they become less motivated (Maertz & Griffeth, 2004; Mitchell et al., 2001). Whilst motivation is not the only factor with a link to turnover, with several other factors being researched (Shenoy, 2015), it is by far the most complex. This is due to the varying types of motivating factors which impact a staff members turnover intention such as those mentioned by Maertz & Griffeth (2004) ranging from calculative forces, a rational view of how staying with their current employer will impact their future, to moral/ethical forces, where an employee's views of quitting a job influence their turnover intentions i.e. thinking that quitting is "giving up" and therefore "bad". From this view of motivation and turnover, the idea of constituent forces demonstrates the relationship at play between bonds with coworkers and turnover through the lens of motivation.

Maertz & Griffeth (2004) explain how constituent forces impact an employee's motivation to stay or leave based on their relationships with others in their firm. Here employees with bonds to others may be less inclined to leave if their constituents are also not motivated to leave. The inverse of this is also true suggesting that when those who an employee shares a bond with leave a firm, they in turn may seek to leave also. Due to this, should there be a bond between a manager and employee, managerial turnover could be found to impact an employee's motivations through this constituent force. This is backed by the research of Vidyarthi et al. (2014) who discovered that relationships with managerial staff can impact a staff members attitude to work in terms of motivation and turnover intention further illustrating that bonds with managers, while capable of swaying employees to stay in a firm, could lead to further turnover should the manager leave.

This mentality can lead to an impact on corporate culture, as Idiegbeyan-ose et al. (2018) describes how part of corporate culture is shared beliefs, norms and values and how they influence members of said cultures actions. Corporate culture is already tied to turnover intention in existing research (Junianti, 2023; Wright, 2021) highlighting again the interconnectedness between relationships/attitudes and turnover intention. This further suggests that if a manager with close relationships to their staff was considering voluntary turnover that this attitude could impact their staff through this corporate culture, creating a cycle of staff members feeding into this culture of high turnover intentions, leading to a demotivated workforce.

However, turnover within a firm is not a black and white issue. Both positive and negative effects of turnover have been found to occur in firms, even at a managerial level. These effects, discussed below, suggest that while corporate culture and constituent forces may cause a shift towards higher turnover intention if managerial turnover were to increase, the impact of such a phenomenon could result in some positive effects for a firm, even potentially spanning to motivation.

Negative Impact of Turnover

The first hurdle introduced through managerial turnover is that of the transfer of knowledge that takes place from the exiting manager to the new manager; during this period the new managers capabilities are limited as they must learn their role as well as the abilities of their subordinates (Kleinknecht & Würtenberger 2022; Revilla et al. 2019; Dess & Shaw 2001). This alone can impact the team and managers efficiency as they find their footing within the new dynamic, which can prevent staff members from completing their designated jobs (Junlian et al., 2014). In addition, information which could have been known by the previous manager may not be directly available to the new manager, for example if an employee had an unspoken agreement to never work weekends or had a negative experience in a role and was excused from undertaking it. New managers who enter may not have had the opportunity to learn this from their predecessor and any deviations from these unspoken agreements could lead to upset employees, who could potentially become demotivated.

This is not always the case though, as Campion and Mitchell (1986) discuss how previous managers who have moved laterally within a firm are often open to guiding and answering questions after the new manager has begun. Within supermarkets this could happen as a manager moves to cover a new department, meaning they are still part of the management team and able to jump in when needed. A new manager who consults their predecessor like this could avoid potentially upsetting employees and may even be seen to be quickly adapting to their role, which could in turn impress staff members and lead to better motivation. Droege and Hoobler (2003) further offer ideas in how to combat knowledge loss in a firm caused by turnover at any level, suggesting implementing new practices such as buddy-systems/mentoring or more inter-departmental work could help to combat the knowledge loss mentioned above to a degree.

However, another key area that is negatively affected by managerial turnover is detriments to the employees' feelings of support, as research posits that due to the emotional labour intensiveness of retail, employees need a sense of support from their organisation to combat burnout (Park et al. 2021; Cox & Patrick, 2012). When a manager has been helping their staff to feel as though their company appreciates their work through affirmations and praise, the loss of that manager could potentially impact the staff members sense of support and begin to lead to burnout. Additionally, Byerly (2012) states that there is already a precedent that when turnover occurs the remaining staff experience added stress, which, given the mentioned emotionally laborious nature of retail, could quicken the rate employees emotionally burnout. Should the new manager be also new to managerial duties entirely, they may not be equipped to deal with this, which in turn could cause the staff member to consider leaving, which would be demotivating to themselves and those in their team they express this to.

Similarly, Campion and Mitchell (1986) also refer to the importance of relationship building for a new manager to succeed, particularly with their own manager and also subordinates. This factor to success cannot always be guaranteed as it is not always easy to predict how people will interact, and friction could arise from various areas, be it a manager trying to implement a bold new idea, or employees resenting the loss of a manager they had bonded with. Lees & Dhanpat (2021) further discuss how relationship building is key to a manager's credibility which is in turn linked to the performance and success of their employees. Kangas

et al. (2016) further discusses how managerial turnover can cause an impact on “inter-organisational relationships” which are linked to a decline in company performance. This further exemplifies the idea that should a new manager struggle to establish bonds with their subordinates that this will have a negative impact on the firm as a whole. However, the inverse also is true suggesting that if a manager does manage to integrate themselves well into their new team, they could see equal if not better performance from employees as well as be seen to be a more credible manager, in turn motivating their staff to work hard and impress this new, well-received manager.

Managerial turnover may even lead to further managerial turnover in the same role, as discussed by Campion and Mitchell (1986) who stated that if a manager suffers difficulties in their role the likelihood of them leaving is higher. This could cause a “*revolving door effect*” where a cycle of managers come into a department, are met with issues caused from previously high turnover, struggle to juggle learning their role alongside creating solutions for the problems that persist and needing to build relationships and then simply opt to leave. If the turnover rate continues to grow, this could begin to lead to further turnover amongst employees, deemed “collective turnover” (Call et al. 2015; Heavey et al. 2013; Hausknecht & Trevor 2010). This can be caused by employees starting to share in the negative perceptions the exiting managers held, internalising those feelings, and taking similar action. This could be seen to impacting the previously discussed corporate culture shared amongst a department or team. In smaller departments this could be devastating as if many of the experienced employees leave, this could lead to large gaps in the remaining employee’s collective knowledge; this coupled with the previously mentioned gaps in knowledge managers may experience through turnover could have devastating implications on a firms performance.

Beyond these negative impacts, a more commonly understood part of turnover is a general cost to it in terms of finances. Non-tangible costs such as knowledge deficits or loss of interpersonal relationship have previously been stated but, as simply put by Hancock et al. (2011), there is a monetary cost to turnover; it was found that for large firms, which some supermarkets who are leaders in their sector are, that there is a potential for a large increase in profits if there was a decrease in turnover. As stated previously, Ireland supermarket industry is already experiencing some of the highest financial costs due to turnover out of all retail

sectors. This in turn suggests that turnover in this sector is high, offering this paper a chance to measure the impact of high managerial turnover rates versus motivation levels.

Positive Impact of Turnover

This is not to say that turnover is an exclusively negative phenomenon, with scholars such as Connolly (2018) finding that for turnover amongst city managers, under certain conditions, positive fiscal outcomes can be brought about through new management. Whilst this research is focused on the public sector, the findings and conclusions can be adapted to fit sectors such as retail. Connolly (2018) clarifies that these findings should not be taken as a message to fire all managers in the search of better finances, but instead that firms experiencing managerial turnover should have a sense of optimism with the introduction of this manager. Although when considering the work of Hancock et al. (2011), it was found that while new employees brought in can be classified as better or in some cases cheaper, on average the costs outweighed the potential gain. With this in mind a firm considering any form of involuntary turnover regarding a manager, e.g. promotion out of their current role, should think carefully and weigh the costs both monetarily and in regard to human capital or knowledge and expertise.

These successes of new managers could be attributed to their adaptability (Starc, 2013; Dalton & Todor, 1979). New managers were found to be one cause for improvements in firms thanks to their arrival allowing for the distancing from rigidity or restrictiveness which arose under the previous managers tenure. With the advent of this new manager, there exists a chance for employees to impact on the new team culture and allow for more flexibility in their work. In turn this could be a motivational factor, as the removal of an uncompromising or authoritarian manager could encourage staff to engage more with their work. Additionally, with the mentioned adaptability of new managers who arrive through turnover, new managers may be better equipped to deal with problems that do arise during this process, and aid in the transitional period.

This flexibility is seen to also come with an increase in innovation and creativity, brought about through the infusion of new ideas from this new manager (Connolly 2018; Dalton & Todor 1979). Research suggests that, as managers come in, they not only are likely to form new ideas, but this behaviour also extends to employees. These employees' ideas could stem from their observations of any inefficiencies or potential improvements for their department. Employees being creative could suggest that they are motivated as Junlian et al. (2014) states that "*organizational creativity stems from employees' initiative*", implying creativity and motivation are linked. This could mean they are perhaps internally motivated from enjoying their jobs or finding them rewarding, or that the turnover has given them additional motivation.

Additionally, turnover can pose a positive impact when the staff being replaced are found to be underperforming or low-quality as found by Call et al. (2015). This is corroborated by Simón et al. (2022) who found that not all turnover consequences are negative and state how, in specific regard to managerial turnover, while there are costs in terms of human capital or social aspects, performance was not found to be negatively impacted. This suggests that not only could performance see an improvement from general staff turnover but that managerial turnovers effects do not reach this far, which could point to the existence of an ideal level of managerial turnover. A combination of removing underperforming staff and rotating of managerial staff in a firm such as a supermarket may therefore pose an opportunity to improve knowledge sharing and further improve departmental performance.

Whilst it has been stated that if a bond existed between a manager and their subordinates that managerial turnover could result in a decrease in motivation or a rise in turnover intention, there also exists the opportunity for an increase in motivation to occur should a poor or negative relationship exist between manager and subordinate. Chen et al. (2011) examined how poor interpersonal relationships between leaders and subordinates lead to demotivation and an increased turnover intention amongst subordinates. It was found that when this leader left, their turnover actually would have the inverse effect and lead to a more motivated team. This suggests that there is another element to consider in this research paper, an employee's relationships to their current and previous manager, as this may suggest why higher or lower

turnover rates among managers may have more or less of an impact on self-reported motivation levels.

Staff members may wish to bring their creative ideas to their manager, which they may have held off on sharing with the previous manager. This is one sign of the documented behaviour of employees improving and engaging more to impress their new manager in the wake of turnover (Kleinknecht and Würtenberger, 2022). While some staff members may simply be internally motivated as they find satisfaction in their jobs (Starc, 2013), some previously under-motivated staff members may also be seen to be more motivated. In a supermarket this could lead to benefits such as more positive customer interactions from staff or willingness to work late.

Research thusly suggests that turnover, at either all levels or at a managerial one specifically, can yield both positive and negative effects for the firm. With turnovers influence being so far reaching to various areas such as finances, efficiency, and team morale, the belief that it can directly impact a staff members motivation is not beyond reason. In understanding whether this relationship exists, it too can be understood to be more positive or negative, or depending on further factors, a combination of the two. Given the research suggesting retail differs in how it affects its staff (Park et al., 2021) and how much of Irelands population are employed within this sector, it is therefore worthy of study.

Research Question

As previously mentioned, the research questions this paper seeks to answer is:

“Does managerial turnover rate impact employee motivation within Irish supermarkets?”

In researching this, a key hypothesis is to be tested:

Hypothesis 1

H1₁. As managerial turnover increases, employee motivation will change

H1₀. As managerial turnover increases, employee motivation is unaffected

If the null hypothesis here is rejected, then the following additional hypotheses will be analysed too:

Hypothesis 2

H2₁. Under high levels of managerial turnover employees are less motivated

H2₀. Under high levels of managerial turnover employee are no less motivated

Hypothesis 3

H3₁. Under zero/low levels of managerial turnover employees are less motivated

H3₀. Under zero/low levels of managerial turnover employees are no less motivated

The answer deduced from these three hypotheses will yield an answer to the practical applications of the research question, as if Hypotheses 2, and 3 are found to be true, then firms may shift their focus to either eliminate managerial turnover or to hit whatever level yields a higher staff motivation level. Conversely, if this relationship does not exist then a firm may seek to incorporate more routine management rotations to ensure a wide breadth of experience amongst their managerial staff.

As previously stated, the literature both suggests that turnover in general and managerial turnover are capable of yielding positive or negative effects for a business in terms of performance and motivation. With several factors influencing how and why turnover could result in these positive or negative impacts, certain questions will therefore be relevant in the data collection phase, such as relationships to managers or length of service. With this information, it can be found:

- If a relationship exists between managerial turnover and motivation
- What role interpersonal relationships between managers and subordinates plays on said relationship
- The general self-reported motivation levels of Irish supermarket employees

This information will hopefully be of use to and encourage others to conduct further study in this industry and area in the future.

Methodology

Overview and Population

The retail sector in Ireland employs a large number of individuals, with Eurostat (2024) stating that over 360,000 people were employed in the combined motor repair and retail trade in 2024. Whilst there is no reliable figure for the exact proportion of this population who work solely in retail, or more specifically supermarkets, it is reasonable to assume that this population is still fairly large. This research paper seeks to target these supermarket employees, all over the age of 18, and up to retirement age, or in some cases beyond if the individual has yet to retire. To be able to make generalisations using the information gathered through this study, a large sample of supermarket employees who fit this age range will be sought out.

To target a sample of this population, convenience sampling will be utilised. Convenience sampling is defined by Scholtz (2021) as being a non-probability sampling method. Where participants in a study are those who opt to participate, typically those who have some connection to the researcher directly or indirectly, whilst limitations of this sampling method exist, such as not being completely representative of the population or undermining qualitative studies validity, it has other traits which make it ideal for this study. Penn et al. (2023) discuss some of the positives to the use of convenience sampling and non-probability sampling techniques in general, these include its suitability for research with limited resources to access the wider population and the speed of data collection. When considering the needs of the research study, this sampling method, while faulted to some degree, is the most feasible approach and has been adopted.

Research Method

Based on the research question and hypotheses that are being tested within this paper it is vital to confirm which method of data collection and analysis is best suited. To this end, researching similar studies and their selected methods to measure the factors this paper also seeks to, namely motivation level and managerial turnover rates, will help guide the chosen tools. Previous studies around motivation levels have been completed using either qualitative

or quantitative methods; with both of these methods yielding unique results in terms of depth and scope of data gathered and analysis tools available.

A qualitative approach refers to a non-numerical approach to gathering information (Mohajan, 2018) where a researcher seeks out to understand complex concepts like feelings or social phenomena (Mwita, 2022). This research tool is often utilised by social sciences due to its several strengths including:

- Rich, well-rounded data can be gathered
- Cost effectiveness stemming from its use of small sample sizes
- The addition of a “human-touch” allowing for the discussion of difficult topics

These and other benefits are some of the reasons why qualitative analysis is popular, though it does feature documented weaknesses too (Mwita, 2022; Mohajan, 2018), these include:

- Chance for researcher bias to influence data
- Findings may be difficult to replicate
- Generalisability is difficult with such small sample sizes.

With these pros and cons to qualitative research, turning to its application in similar studies may help to illuminate whether it warrants utilisation as part of this research paper.

In terms of a qualitative approach to researching employee’s motivation levels, Tschelisnig & Westerlaken (2022) used qualitative interviews when researching how sustainable workplaces impact motivation. This research was conducted with a sample size of 8 employees out of a population of 60. Interviewing to determine an employee’s motivation is in line with the previously discussed research of Maertz & Griffeth (2004) who suggested questions a researcher may ask to measure motivation along three of the eight forces discussed in their work. These questions, similar to those used in Tschelisnig & Westerlaken’s work, may be better asked in an open-ended manner and any recurring themes highlighted. While this may be beneficial in terms of identifying if any external factor could be at play in terms of employee’s motivational levels, this approach may not be best suited to seeking an answer to this particular research question. Due to the small sample size used in qualitative research, its

poor generalisability, and the numerical nature of the relationships being studied, a qualitative approach appears a poor choice.

To this end, a quantitative approach is to be considered, with a quantitative approach being defined as an investigation method that collects data which is quantifiable and, through the use of statistical analysis, can provide generalisable findings; this research method is used to not only quantify belief or attitudes but to also identify any relationships that may exist (Kittur, 2023). These reasons alone help suggest that quantitative analysis is the ideal method for this paper, but to cement this research into how similar studies utilised this approach is needed.

Following the research method of Mahmoud et al. (2020) who measured motivation across 3 generations, an online survey could be utilized; this was similarly used by Rožman et al. (2017) when researching motivation and satisfaction. Beyond a precedent for the use of surveys, they may also be better suited to reaching supermarket employees working full time, as the interview process associated with a qualitative approach is lengthy and in-depth, which these individuals may not have the time available to participate in. This is backed by the research of Mitchell et al. (2001) who opted to use surveys when measuring turnover and motivation, and chose to issue surveys to grocery store employees, highlighting this as an effective method used for targeting this population. The benefits of choosing a quantitative approach to data collection, specifically regarding the research question at hand, are:

- It looks at relationships between variables (In this case, number of managers and employee motivation)
- It allows for generalisations to be made (Allowing for the samples results to be considered representative of the population of supermarket employees in Ireland)
- It can limit the scope of a study to a smaller number of variables (Allowing for this paper to focus on how two specific variables relate, without having to incorporate any specific or niche variables that could arise from interviews)

Given the hypotheses this paper wants to answer, the size of the population, and their ability to be spread faster and farther, surveys are the chosen method. The survey will seek to understand an employee's current motivation level, measure how long they've held their position, and compare this to how many managers they have had. The questions regarding factors such as age, length of service, and number of managers had by employees will be rather simple in nature and standard with ones used in past research. When measuring motivation, a 5 level Likert scale can be used, similarly to those used by Novianthi et al. (2023) in their research of motivation levels. To this end, using a combination of questions from Chen et al. (2020) and Kasser et al. (1992) will be employed, such as: "*How much would you say you enjoy doing your work*" and "*How well do you get along with your superiors*". Additional questions tailored to the relationship between their motivation and their manager will be utilized too, such as: "*If your departments manager has changed during your service, how impactful would you say this was to your motivation*". These questions, found in Appendix 1, will seek to determine if motivation reported may be high/low as a result of constituent forces, previously described.

Collected Sample

An online survey was released, posted across a range of social media platforms, and with physical flyers placed in various supermarkets within Dublin. From this, a total of 51 respondents completed the survey, with employees ranging in age and service length, as well as career level and number of previous managers. Whilst the population of this study is quite large, unfortunately a small sample was found which may impact the generalisability of this study, nonetheless the answers of the respondents may still yield insights to the population. A breakdown of some of the sample's characteristics is discussed below:

Gender Identity

The survey published allowed for respondents to select their gender identity from three multiple choice options: Man, Woman, or Prefer not to say, or to type in a custom response should they wish to. From the 51 responses, the gender divide amongst them equates to a roughly 69:31 gender ratio of women to men (Figure 1), with no respondents electing to type in a custom response or wishing to not select any option. This gender ratio is similar to other

surveys of the retail industry (Rubio-Valdehita et al., 2024; Moreno et al., 2019; Fields & Margavio, 1996) where the gender ratio can range from 30-40% male to 70-60% female. With this in mind, while the sample size is small, it would appear to have captured a relatively representative gender ratio in terms of respondents.

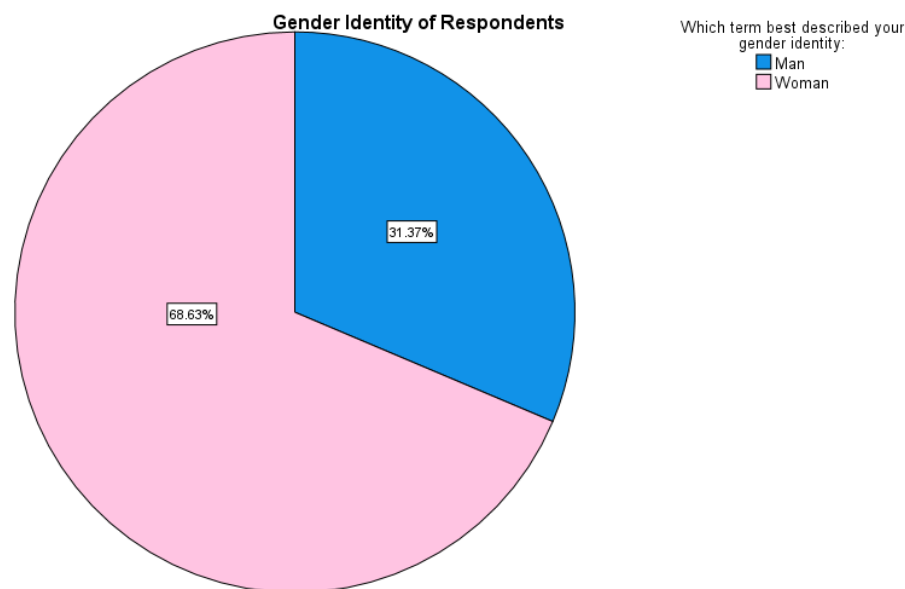


Figure 1 – Gender Identity of Respondents

Hours of Work

When analysing the contracted working hours of respondents, there appeared to be an almost equal number of employees contracted to work part time, for the purposes of this study defined as hours less than 35, and full-time employees, those working upwards of 35 hours a week. This in the context of the female dominant sector of retail work makes sense as according to the CSO (2023a) women working in retail accounted for over 71% of the part time employees and just over 53% of full-time employees in 2022. This is visible through the prevalence of female respondents in these lower hour bands, where men tend to cluster nearer the higher bands (Figure 2).

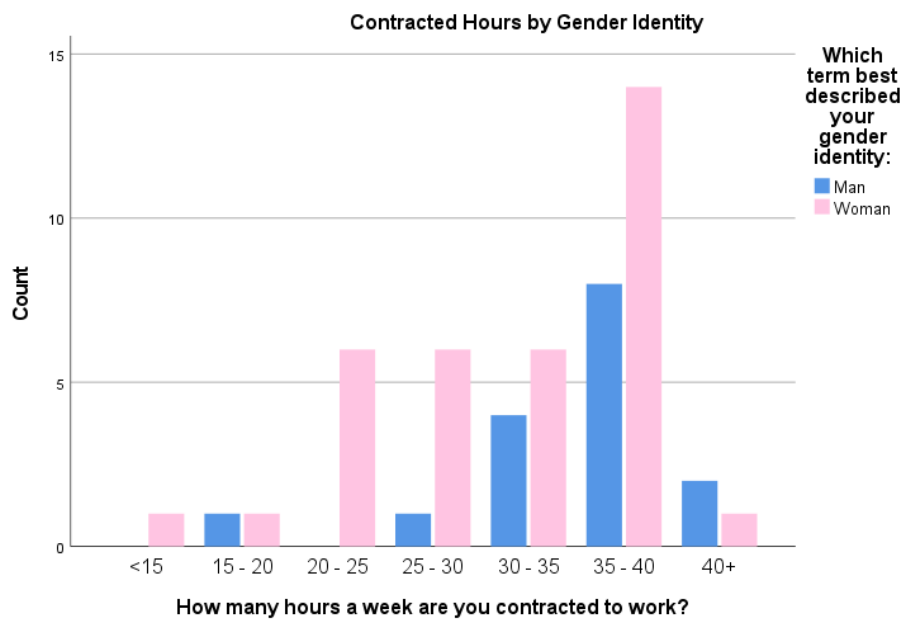


Figure 2 – Contracted Hours by Gender Identity

Age of Respondents

The survey sample managed to capture respondents of varying working ages, from the youngest segment of 18-24, up to those aged 55-64. When researching motivation, age should be considered, as the research of Inceoglu et al. (2011) discusses how motivational factors tend to change with age, for example older individuals may place higher importance on autonomy or monetary rewards. In capturing responses from different age groups, it could be shown that with age motivations related to managerial turnovers impact could change, becoming more or less important. The largest segment of the respondents falls into the 18-24 year old range (Figure 3), which may be a result of the online nature of the survey, and as such could be a limitation to be revisited by future research in this area.

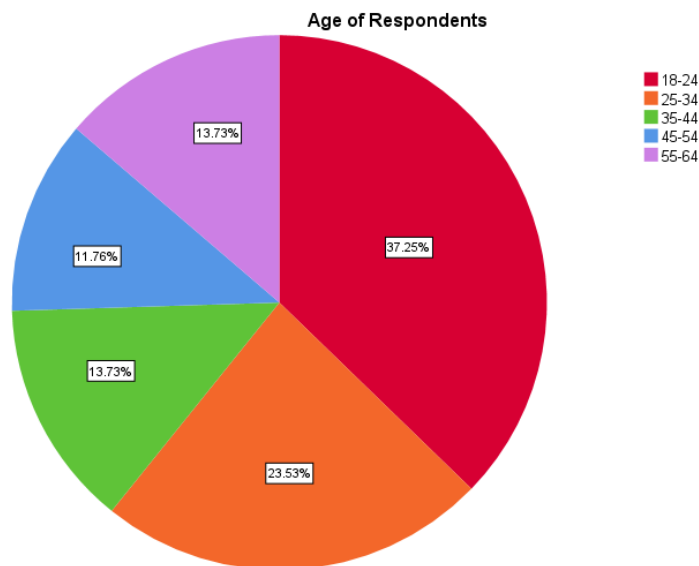


Figure 3 – Ages of Respondents

Length of Service

Finally, in terms of respondent's length of service, there again was a large range of responses. As Figure 4 shows, there are employees who have been employed in excess of 25 years and some who have been employed less than 2.5 years. When considering the research of Karatepe & Uludag (2007) who found a positive relationship between length of service and career satisfaction in the hospitality industry, service length may prove to be a factor that influences how motivation may react to managerial turnover; employees with longer service lengths may be immune to managerial turnovers implications as they may become desensitised to it should it be a common occurrence, where newer staff may not have the experience to deal with the negative impacts it can bring as mentioned previously.

Research Design

The final survey given to respondents was divided into sections, focusing on three different areas, these being:

Career Background

This area focused on learning about each respondent's career as a supermarket employee within Ireland. Questions included their previously discussed contracted hours and length of service as well as job level, such as if they held entry level or managerial position, if they had a specific manager above them, so as to separate those who would have not experienced managerial turnover due to a lack of manager, and number of managers respondents have had, left as an open ended question so as to capture any extremes figures which may arise.

Motivations and Relationships

This area was focused on measuring an employee's motivational level as well as their relationships to those in their department plus any past managers they may have had (if applicable). These questions were included as they directly tie in to answering the research question, with the relationship-based questions hoping to illuminate if any constituent forces were at play.

Demographic Data

Due to the nature of the research, the demographic data gathered was limited so as to avoid gathering superfluous information. Not only would information regarding demographic data such as religion or race not tie directly into proving or disproving the hypotheses directly, gathering this unnecessary data may make respondents uncomfortable as they may have felt this data made them more identifiable.

When creating the survey itself previous research regarding motivation levels was used to help draft it. The questions regarding factors such as age, length of service, and number of managers had by employees will be rather simple in nature and standard with ones used in past research. When measuring motivation, a 5 level Likert scale can be used, similarly to those used by Novianthi et al. (2023) in their research of motivation levels. To this end, using a combination of questions from Chen et al. (2020) and Kasser et al. (1992) will be employed, such as: *“How much would you say you enjoy doing your work”* and *“How well do you get along with your superiors”*. Additional questions tailored to the relationship between their motivation and their manager will be utilized too, such as: *“If your departments manager has changed during your service, how impactful would you say this was to your motivation”*.

Data Analysis

As part of analysing the data, all responses were transferred to Excel, with respondents who didn't fit the criteria removed and the data “cleaned”, as Dasari & Varma (2022) detail how cleaning data is key to improving its usability and removing inconsistencies. Part of the data cleaning process for this survey included unifying the formatting of open-ended questions regarding length of employment and number of managers, as many respondents typed out the number of years/managers respectively. From the 51 responses, all 51 responded “Yes” to being currently employed within Irish supermarkets and consented to the survey, meaning all the data was useable in the analysis. From here data was analysed using SPSS, a statistical analysis programme, with the findings of the various analytical tools discussed in the Findings section of this paper.

Ethical Considerations

No major potential ethical issues were identified as part of this research, however, consent from all participants was requested prior to them taking part. This was done through outlining exactly what data was being collected, how it would be stored and used, and the purpose of its collection on a page prior to the survey itself, requiring potential respondents to accept to their data being gathered in line with the outlined procedures. Beyond this an ethical review form was submitted as part of the proposal for this research to the National College of

Ireland, outlining the research being undertaken to ensure it followed all ethical guidelines set out by the National College of Ireland.

Limitations

Limitations of the methodological approach chosen may impact upon the research being undertaken. One such limitation is the use of surveys to self-report measures such as motivation, which could be influenced by numerous factors on any given day. Beyond this due to the unique shift patterns of supermarket employees, especially due to the high number of part-time employees, gathering data could be a challenge, not only as a result of it being hard to ensure these employees are made aware of the survey, but also in terms of them finding the time to complete the survey. Additionally, as resources are limited, the ability to share the flyers which had links to the survey as well as the ability to promote any social media posts regarding survey participation were limited, further limiting the sample size.

Findings

In order to answer the research question of “*Does managerial turnover rate impact employee motivation within Irish supermarkets?*” the first step was to analyse the motivation level of the respondents. In doing this, 5 Likert scale questions based on previous research into motivation levels were utilised and presented to respondents. To ensure that these questions gave a “reliable” answer, meaning that the various questions gave consistent results, Cronbach’s alpha was calculated using SPSS’ analytical tools. Malapane & Ndlovu (2024) detail how Cronbach’s alpha is well suited for use with Likert scale questions, reinforcing its selection as an analytical tool for this study.

The figure returned for Cronbach’s alpha for employees self-reported motivation levels, as shown in Table 1, was $\alpha = 0.902$. This figure is well above the minimum acceptable figure of $\alpha = 0.5$, allowing for this paper to utilise the motivational levels reported. Further analysing these responses, the mean motivational level could be found, with $\bar{x} = 3.3571$, as well as the standard deviation of $\sigma = 1.02127$, suggesting that the average motivational level of respondents was fairly middling, with few cases of individuals hitting the extreme ends of the scale.

Table 1.

Number of Items	Mean (\bar{x})	Standard Deviation (σ)	Cronbach’s Alpha (α)
5	3.3571	1.02127	0.902

Next it was important to calculate the turnover rates of employee’s managers based on their service length through dividing the number of managers by service length in years. First, any responses which replied “No” to having direct managers above them were removed from the analysis, leaving a resulting sample of 42 responses. From these 42 responses their “Average Manager per Year of Service” (AM/YS) was calculated and analysed. Table 2 shows the descriptive statistics of this variable, with key takeaways including the mean average managers per year of service being $\bar{x} = 0.7671$ with a standard deviation of $\sigma = 0.60102$. In practice this figure suggests that most employees have a manager last an average of 475.81 days, or just over a year and 3 months.

Table 2.

Minimum	Maximum	Mean (\bar{x})	Standard Deviation (σ)
0.05	2.67	0.7671	0.60102

Hypothesis 1

To begin, Hypothesis 1 should be investigated, and the null hypothesis accepted or rejected, as in doing this allows for the analysis of the further hypotheses of this study. Hypothesis 1, as previously stated, is as follows:

H1₁. As managerial turnover increases, employee motivation will change

H1₀. As managerial turnover increases, employee motivation is unaffected

To this end, any form of correlation and its significance should be calculated between the two variables, average motivation and AM/YS. Table 3 showcases the result of a Bivariate Pearson Correlation. The results indicate a negative relationship between average motivation and AM/YS, with the relationship also found to be significant, where $p=0.01$; this relationship is further shown from Figure 4, a scatterplot of these two variables.

Table 3.

		Average Motivation	AM/YS
Average Motivation	Pearson Correlation	1	-.430**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.005
	N	51	42
AM/YS	Pearson Correlation	-.430**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.005	
	N	42	42

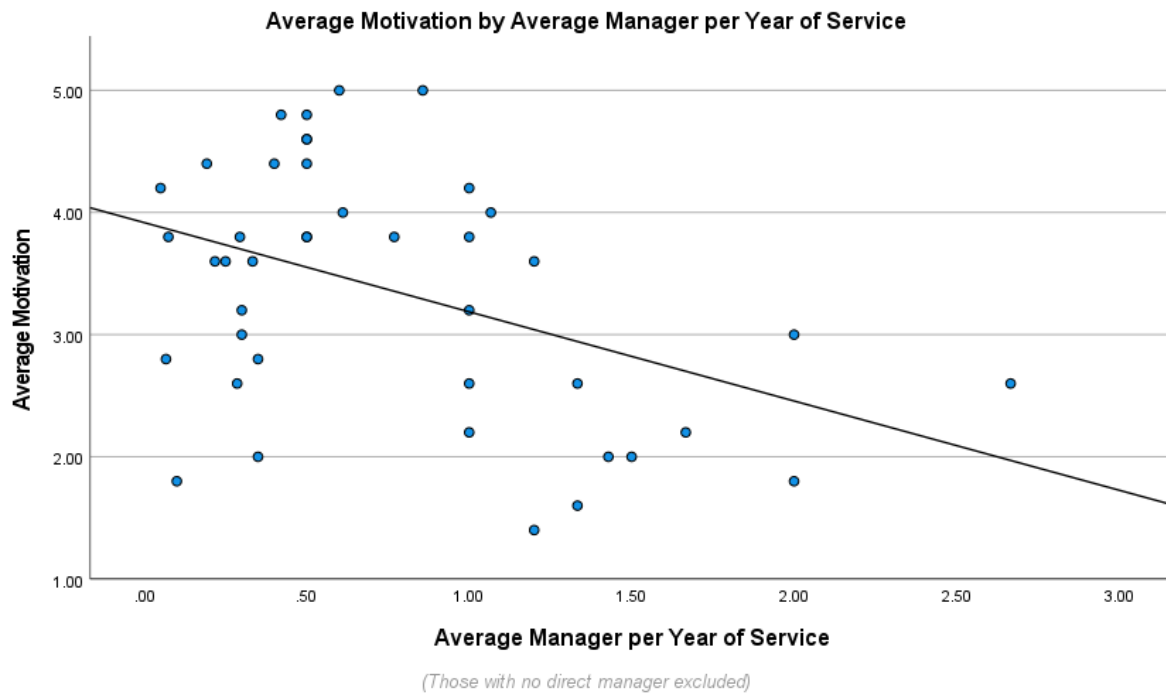


Figure 4 – Average Motivation by Average Manager per Year of Service (AM/YS)

Based on the significant, negative relationship found which suggests that as managerial turnover rises (AM/YS) average motivation levels fall, the null hypothesis that “*H1₀. As managerial turnover increases, employee motivation is unaffected*” can be rejected.

Hypothesis 2

The next hypothesis being tested relates to motivation levels under a high level of turnover.

H2₁. Under high levels of managerial turnover employees are less motivated

H2₀. Under high levels of managerial turnover employee are no less motivated

A definition for “High levels of managerial turnover” needs to be defined for the purpose of this research. Given that the mean for the sample’s AM/YS and its standard deviation are known, it is possible to separate out values which fall beyond the majority. To do this, finding any values which exceeded the AM/YS mean of $\bar{x} = 0.7671$ by 2 standard deviations, or $2\sigma = 1.20204$, would yield in a subsection of the sample that could be defined as meeting a high level of managerial turnover. It was found, as seen in table 4, that 3 respondents fell into this range all having a AM/YS exceeding 1.96914. The average motivation of these respondents was calculated in order to compare this subset to the total populations average.

Table 4.

Number of Items	Mean Motivation (\bar{x})	Standard Deviation (σ)
3	2.4667	0.61101

It was found that those who reported a higher AM/YS reported a lower average motivation of 2.4667 compared to the total samples average of 3.3571. This difference in motivation level would suggest that, based on the sample, the average motivation level of employees experiencing high levels of employee motivation is lower than those experiencing the average levels of turnover. Therefore, it is reasonable to reject the null hypothesis that “*H2₀. Under high levels of managerial turnover employee are no less motivated*”.

Hypothesis 3

The final hypothesis focuses on an analysis of those who experience low to no managerial turnover and seeks to determine if they experience decreased motivation:

H3₁. Under zero/low levels of managerial turnover employees are less motivated

H3₀. Under zero/low levels of managerial turnover employees are no less motivated

Similarly to Hypothesis 2, a definition for those who experience zero/low managerial turnover needs to be defined. However, when attempting to look for values 2 standard deviations away from the mean of AM/YS in the opposite direction from H2, there unfortunately are no values which fall in this range. In order to therefore be able to accept or reject the null hypothesis, the average reported motivation levels of those previously excluded from the calculation of average motivation, meaning those who reported having no direct manager, will be considered. Additionally, those who reported to having a manager but only 1 manager per year of service will also be measured, as they do not experience managerial turnover. Based on these 9 responses, table 5 was created and outlines the mean motivational levels of this group.

Table 5.

Number of Items	Mean Motivation (\bar{x})	Standard Deviation (σ)
11	3.4727	0.86382

Interestingly, those with no managerial turnover reported a higher mean motivation value of 3.04727 compared to the mean of those with managers which was 3.3571. This higher reported motivation would appear to indicate that an adjusted null hypothesis stating that “*H3₀. Under zero levels of managerial turnover employees are no less motivated*” is to be accepted. This would imply that some degree of managerial turnover leads to an decrease in employee motivation.

Additional Findings

While the research question and hypotheses relating to it have been answered and tested, there is other information found through the course of this study which may also prove useful, both from an academic standpoint and in terms of the practical applications of this research.

Table 6 shows the descriptive statistics of respondent’s answers to the relationship questions asked as part of the survey. Some interesting takeaways of these figures include:

- A higher average relationship reported with current managers compared to previous managers by those who had them
- No respondents reported a relationship level of 1 with their current colleagues or manager on the Likert scale questions regarding them.
- The responses of relationships to coworkers are high with a far smaller standard deviation compared to the other relationships, implying a strong bond exists between a large portion of respondents and their colleagues.

Table 6.

Relationship With	Count	Minimum	Maximum	Mean (\bar{x})	Standard Deviation (σ)
Colleagues	51	2	5	4.61	.750
Current Manager	51	2	5	4.1	.964
Previous Manger	48	1	5	3.9	1.036

Table 7 displays the average motivational level reported grouped by each respondent's job title. Viewing the descriptive statistics for the motivation at each job title yields an opportunity to contrast the results found at different stages in a career. Based on the achieved sample, it would appear that there is an increase in average motivation levels tied to how high of a position the employee holds. If a wider number of staff members at each level could be found, such as a higher number of store managers, then this relationship could be given further exploration.

Table 7.

Job Title	Count	Mean (\bar{x})	Standard Deviation (σ)
Customer Assistant / Entry Level	37	3.2054	1.10904
Supervisor / Team Lead	8	3.2250	1.10809
Line Manager / Department Manager	5	3.8800	.80747
Store Manager	1	4.4	

Finally, Table 8 provides a comparison of the means of total motivation levels grouped by age and gender identity. This analysis allows for a brief overview of how gender and age may be impactful factors on motivation. Some key takeaways from this data include:

- Men on average report a higher mean motivational level of 3.3625, where women report an average of 3.2686. This places men above the total average of all respondent's motivational level of 3.2980.
- The lowest motivated age group on average for both genders were those aged 18-24, with a mean motivation of 1.9 for men and 2.7467 for women.
- The most motivated age group for men was those aged 55-64 with a mean of 5, though this result is only from one respondent, as such the second and third motivated groups are men who were 45-54 and 35-44 years old respectively.
- The most motivated age group for women is a tie between both women aged 55-64 and women aged 25-34. Both these groups averaged a motivation level of 3.8 across 6 responses.

Table 8.

Gender	How old are you?	Count	Mean (\bar{x})	Std. Deviation
Man	18-24	4	1.9000	.68313
	25-34	6	3.5333	.57504
	35-44	3	3.7333	.83267
	45-54	2	4.4000	.84853
	55-64	1	5.0000	.
	Total	16	3.3625	1.12953
Woman	18-24	15	2.7467	.92417
	25-34	6	3.8000	1.01193
	35-44	4	3.6500	.99833
	45-54	4	3.2500	1.28970
	55-64	6	3.8000	1.13137
	Total	35	3.2686	1.07806
Total	18-24	19	2.5684	.93158
	25-34	12	3.6667	.79696
	35-44	7	3.6857	.85524
	45-54	6	3.6333	1.22257
	55-64	7	3.9714	1.12800
	Total	51	3.2980	1.08397

Further analysis of the relationship between how gender plays a role in understanding motivation, specifically in regard to managerial turnover, can be completed. Firstly, scatter plots, using the same variables used to analyse Hypothesis 1, can be viewed split by gender in Figure 5 & 6 below.

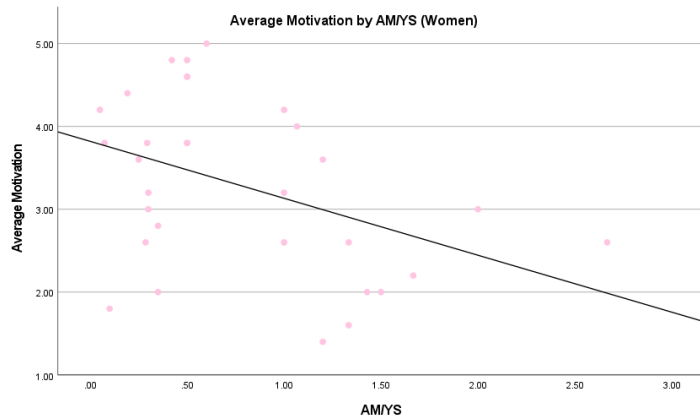


Figure 5. Average Motivation by AM/YS for Women

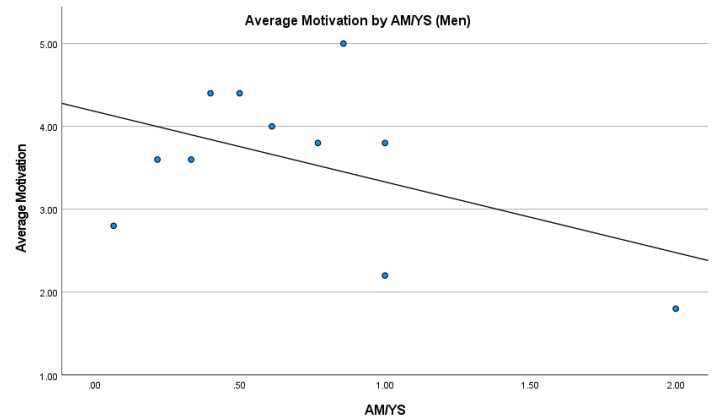


Figure 6. Average Motivation by AM/YS for Men

As a negative relationship was found again, similar to in Figure 4, a similar regression analysis was conducted, resulting in Table 9 for Women and Table 10 for Men. These tables are similar to Table 3, as they consider the same variables, the key difference being the N or count is different for each, which in turn yielded a different level of significance and thereby correlation.

Table 9.

Average Motivation	Pearson Correlation	1	-.415*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.020
	N	35	31
AM/YS	Pearson Correlation	-.415*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.020	
	N	31	42

Table 10.

Average Motivation	Pearson Correlation	1	-.468
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.146
	N	16	11
AM/YS	Pearson Correlation	-.468	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.146	
	N	11	16

Based on the analysis conducted, it could be deduced that, while the sample for each gender is relatively small and therefore makes generalisations harder, that women are seemingly more impacted in terms of their motivation based on managerial turnover. Further studies in this area may wish to focus upon this gender imbalance, with further details of such a study detailed in the Conclusions section of this study.

Discussion

The findings of this paper have far-reaching implications in terms of both theoretical research and practical problem solving related to employee motivation as it related to turnover.

Theoretical Implications

Research into the factor's impacting motivation has yielded a wide range of results, depending on how motivation has been measured. The previously cited work of Maertz & Griffeth (2004) analysed motivation along 8 specific factors, offering a wide range of motivational forces which can impact employees. However, of these eight forces, the impact of managerial turnover, while found to have an impact on motivation, does not fit well within the scope of these 8 forces. As such it is probable to assume that more forces beyond these 8 exist, with these extra factors potentially influencing any studies of motivation which were based on the work of Maertz & Griffeth. This could be applied to a wide array of studies of motivation, including and beyond just the supermarket industry. As such this study's findings posit another factor researchers ought to consider when measuring the level of motivation within a population as well as the sources of poor or high motivation.

Additionally, this paper adds to the body of work regarding the results of managerial turnover for a firm. Previous studies identified issues such as gaps in knowledge (Kleinknecht & Würtenberger 2022; Revilla et al. 2019; Dess & Shaw 2001), negative impacts on relationships between staff (Lees & Dhanpat, 2021; Kangas et al., 2016), or damage to corporate culture leading to further turnover amongst colleagues (Call et al. 2015; Heavey et al. 2013; Hausknecht & Trevor 2010). Adding the impact on motivation levels of said managers employees to this, highlights that a need for research into how varying degrees of managerial turnover impact these factors and how they may relate to one another.

This study observed a difference in the effect managerial turnover appeared to have on motivation when viewed by gender. Differing attitudes in terms of motivation based on gender have long been established, with studies determining that men and women's motivation can be influenced to different degrees by the same factors (Porter et al., 2019). The findings of this paper not only support this, having found a stronger relationship between the impact of managerial turnover and women reported motivational level. This could be considered to align with the work of Štefko et al. (2017) where it was suggested that female

employees drew more motivation from areas such as praise or recognition than male. In relation to managerial turnover, this could be the cause of the stronger correlation found, as those who draw more motivation from their manager through praise would likely feel the impact of a shift in manager stronger and it could disrupt their source of motivation.

Practical Implications

The importance of motivated employees, particularly in retail, has been highlighted by Fields & Margavio (1996) who discuss how due to the direct interactions retail staff have with consumers, their motivation level often translates into a direct impact on customer satisfaction. Based on this, it is in the best interests of a supermarket firm to maximise employee motivation. Therefore, when considering the findings of this study, managerial turnover may be a factor to consider if a firm is dealing with an unmotivated workforce. Supermarkets are an industry where manager rotations exist, where a manager, as part of their training, may rotate between running departments at set intervals. Based on the findings, this figure could be negatively impacting a firm that utilises such a practice, especially if a firm rotates manager out at shorter intervals. The findings suggested that higher turnover rates lead to lower motivation, which in practice would suggest that should a firm wish to use this technique they should consider the following:

- Attempt to rotate managers departments at longer intervals, either meeting or exceeding the mean length of 1 year and 3 months. In doing this, managerial turnovers impact may be minimised as the AM/YS figure would drop, which was found to be linked to higher average motivational levels.
- Or, based on the research of Droege and Hoobler (2003), alter the of approach the use manager rotations as a training tool, to a more mentoring based approach. Here new/trainee managers could shadow or slowly transition into their role, with emphasis on an inter-departmental approach to this training. This would allow for better knowledge flow to the new manager as well as allow for the old manager to better facilitate relationship building between their replacement and former staff.

Additionally, it was found that entry level staff members had the lowest reported motivation out of the respondents. Supermarket management may need to view what factors are linked to this drop in motivation at the lower end of the career ladder. Considering the previously discussed importance of motivation amongst entry level staff due to their interactions with

customers, firms should seek to understand how to improve this average, such as through discovering why those higher up are more motivated. This could be due to a number of factors, ranging from the emotional laboriousness of retail as stated by Park et al. (2021) to the dissatisfaction with pay found by Shittu (2008). This poor motivation could be a result of a poor corporate culture (Idiegbeyan-ose et al., 2018) which may lead to turnover (Junianti, 2023; Wright, 2021) and then cause a turnover to become a problem amongst subordinates, leading to “collective turnover” (Call et al. 2015; Heavey et al. 2013; Hausknecht & Trevor 2010). As supermarkets accounted for some of the highest turnover amongst Irelands retail sector in 2020 (CSO, 2023b) this would suggest that firms must truly consider how to motivate their entry-level staff. Whilst the factors causing this lower motivation are likely vast and complex, improving any form of managerial turnover would be a way for a firm to limit the possible factors causing it.

Future Studies

Future research into the link found in this paper could benefit from considering some of the faults of this paper, which if improved, could yield further results about the level of impact of this phenomenon.

One alteration to the research to consider is to gather the specific departments of respondents and determine if this factor influences responses. Whilst this study did consider how those who held positions higher or lower on the career ladder within supermarkets, it failed to consider if departments also had a role to play. Within supermarkets, there are usually a degree of similarity in terms of the departments found across companies, most having some form of checkout/front-end which would be much more customer facing, where there also exists a shop floor team too, typically responsible for packing out stock. Larger firms or store formats may include a whole host of additional departments, whether they be more refined groups, such as some stores splitting a shop floor department into a dry grocery team and a fresh team, whilst some may have extra departments such as stock control, bakery, or online shopping/dotcom depending on the needs of the firm. Fields & Margavio (1996) found that job satisfaction between employees in a supermarket was different, with front-end staff feeling the least satisfied with their work. Considering that job satisfaction can differ from department to department, it could be found through further studies that managerial turnovers impact on employee motivation also differs at a departmental level.

Another way future studies could improve upon the research completed could be through determining what other areas managerial turnover impacts in terms of attitudes of employees. As previously discussed, Fields & Margavio (1996) measured job satisfaction of supermarket employees, dissecting their responses in terms of feelings regarding the kind of work they do or their feelings about their workload. This paper aimed to measure satisfaction and contrast it based on departments. A paper could build upon the work of both that paper and this study, taking a measure of employee satisfaction and seeking out of a relationship exists between the values and the average managers per year of service, similarly to this paper. As Fields & Margavio (1996) state job satisfaction has been linked to performance, similarly to motivation as stated by Dharmanto (2023). This link to performance could suggest that performance and the factors influencing it are all tied in some way to managerial turnover specifically. This would have strong practical implications for not just the supermarket industry but firms on the whole. As such further analysis into this topic would be impactful and important.

Conclusion

This paper sought to determine if managerial turnover had a relationship to employee's motivation levels. With how prevalent of an issue turnover among Irish supermarkets is, the importance of a motivated workforce in this industry, and the various forms of movement that can take place for managers in this field, this industry was a clear choice for this study. The sample found for this study has given valuable insights into the diverse motivation levels of supermarket staff in Ireland. It is even more pertinent then, that all forces affecting motivation are understood by researchers and businesses alike, allowing for both to better determine how or why motivation levels among this population, and beyond, are higher or lower.

With the findings of this paper pointing to a statistically significant, negative relationship between managerial turnover rates and employee motivation, a new variable can be added to the existing literature on factors affecting motivation. This relationship may have seemed obvious to most, as the factors which often lead to managerial turnover in a firm would likely also result in a lower morale amongst the general staff, yet concrete, quantitative analysis of this relationship within the chosen sector did not exist prior to this study. As such, this research sought to and has achieved its goal of not only determining if this relationship existed using statistical analysis of supermarket employees, but also of expanding on the available body of work conducted on this often-overlooked sector of the Irish workforce.

From this paper's findings, it is hoped that further studies can be conducted into this relationship, across new sectors and new countries. This further exploration may yield greater understanding of how this relationships functions, such as if an ideal rate of managerial turnover exists to yield better motivation, and for further recommendations into the practical implications for firms to be explored and expanded upon.

To conclude this paper suggests that higher managerial turnover rates lead to a lower employee motivation level amongst Irish supermarket employees, which due to the lack of currently available research, needs to be considered by firms and academics alike as a potential cause for demotivated employees, and procedures put in place to minimise either the managerial turnover rate in this area, or to mitigate its impact on staff.

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Appendix

Appendix 1

Career Background

Are you currently employed by a supermarket located in Ireland?	Yes / No
How long have you worked with this company?	<Open Ended>
Which best describes your role within this company	Customer Assistant / Supervisor / Line Manager / Deputy Manager / Store Manager / Other
In your role, do you have a singular manager specific to your department e.g. Checkouts, Floor, Fresh?	Yes / No
If yes, over your time within this department, how many different managers has your department had?	<Open Ended>
How many hours are you contracted to work a week?	<15 / 15 - 20 / 20 - 25 / 25 - 30 / 30 - 35 / 35 -40 / 40+

Motivational and Relationships

How much would you say you enjoy doing your work?	1 (Not at all) – 5 (Very Much)
How interested in your work are you?	1 (Not at all) – 5 (Very Much)
How often do you look forward to going to work?	1 (Never) – 5 (Every Day)
How motivated are you to do a good job at work?	1 (Not at all) – 5 (Very Much)
To what extent is your work fulfilling to you?	1 (Not at all – 5 (Very Much)
How well do you get on with other colleagues in your department, if applicable?	1 (Not at all) – 5 (Very Much)
How well do you get on with your current manager in your department?	1 (Not at all) – 5 (Very Much)
If you have had previous manager(s), on average how well did you get along with them?	1 (Not at all) – 5 (Very Much)
If your department has had a change of manager in the past, how much of an impact did this have on your feelings towards your work?	1 (No Impact) – 5 (A Very Large Impact)
If your department has had a change of manager in the past, how well do you think the change was handled	1 (Very Bad) – 5 (Very Well)

Demographic

Which term best described your gender identity:	Man / Woman / Prefer Not To Say / Other
How old are you?	18-24 / 25-34 / 35-44 / 45-54 / 55-64 / 65+