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Motivational Theories – A Critical Analysis

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Abstract

As we know motivation is a mechanism which ultimately influences people to act in a desired way. Here in this study we try to focus on the theoretical aspects of motivation from early era and also from contemporary era. And we are trying to find out some common issues about these motivational theories from different time periods. By finding out these familiar factors it will ultimately help us to better understand the importance and proper application of motivational theories in professional environment.

Introduction

In this era of globalization and liberalization, employees are becoming the competitive advantage for business. A business may manage with mediocre employees but competent employees can propel an average business to greater heights. Likewise, bad employees can cause flourishing business empires to collapse. In a tight labor market, keeping good employees and developing employee loyalty becomes increasingly important and a continuing challenge. Now-a-days it is quite challenging to get the right people for the job is very hard.

With the tight labor market, employers therefore need a strategy to retain their key experts and crucial skilled workers. As prospective employers continuously bid for top performers, management strategies must therefore give due consideration and sufficient resource allocation to keep employees motivated and satisfied. The idea is that the satisfied employee is less likely to pursue greener pastures. Thus, implementing desirable human resource management policies will have a positive effect on employee loyalty. (Wan, 2009)

Objective of the Study

The main objective of this study is to explain some of the early and modern theories of motivation. We have tried here to find out some commonalities among these motivational theories. So that we can ensure their proper application in practical and professional environment. As we have reviewed some of these old and new theories of motivation and critically evaluated them for fulfilling this particular objective.

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Methodology

The study is done based on secondary information. Here we use different theoretical references most of them are from secondary data sources. We try to use information from diverse origins such as – journals, literature reviews and electronic media. This study is descriptive and qualitative in nature.

Theories on Motivation

Motivation is a way of creating high level of enthusiasm to reach organizational goals, and this situation is accommodated by satisfying some individual need. Basically, motivation refers to achieving organizational main goals by satisfying individual employee's needs or demands.

According to Pinder (1998 in Ambrose & Kulik, 1999) work motivation may be regarded as a set of internal and external forces that initiate work-related behavior, and determine its form, direction, intensity and duration. The concept relates to the work context specifically, and includes the influence on work behavior of both environmental forces, and those inherent in the person. In the workplace, work motivation presents as an invisible, personal and hypothetical construct that manifests itself in the form of observable, and therefore measurable, behaviors.

Improving productivity is one big challenge that engages the attention of employers, whether private or public by devising appropriate mechanism for motivating their workers. The seriousness of this challenge can be understood from the management's perception of the strong functional correlation between employee motivation and organizational productivity. For years, employers of labor have been experimenting with different strategies in an attempt to relate effectively, the motivation of workers to their work contribution.

Ouchi, W. G. (1987) has explained the importance of motivation as related to productivity. He explored the reasons why Japan's national productivity is soaring. He went further to say that the secret of the Japanese success is the great concern Japanese manager's show for the well-being and development of workers. The fact that motivation is the most important factor for productivity and quality is not a new discovery. It has been pointed out for the first time by the studies conducted by Elton Mayo around 1930. Since then there have been several studies that confirmed the same results in several industries including the software development one. (Ouchi, 1987)

Motivation is very important for the managers and officers to know and understand why people behave differently at workplace and how to manipulate their behavior so that they exert their best efforts to achieve organizational goals. It is the goal of managers at every stratum to have employees motivated so that work can progress at desired rate, pace and time.

If employees feel that their inputs such as efforts, commitment, loyalty, trust, and enthusiasm to the organization are fairly and adequately rewarded by outputs such as financial and non-financial

benefits or incentives, they remain motivated and continue to provide inputs towards higher productivity. Employees get de-motivated due to the *perceived* absence of such equity. (Ahmad, Mukaddes, Rashed, & Samad, 2010)

We begin by looking at three early motivation theories: Maslow's hierarchy of needs, Herzberg Motivation/Hygiene theory and Victor Vroom's Expectancy theory. Although more valid explanations of motivation have been developed, these early theories are important because they represent the foundation from which contemporary motivation theories were developed and because many practicing managers still use them.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

Maslow's Hierarchy of needs must be one of the best known motivation theories in the world. Maslow is a good starting point to start examining the different motivation theories. Maslow starts with the idea that people always tend to want something and what they want depends on what they already have. Maslow proposed that there are five different levels of needs people have to seek for satisfaction of their basic needs. (Mullins 2007, 258) The first or lowest level is **Physiological needs**. Before these needs which include for example food, water, shelter and clothing are fulfilled a person doesn't have any other needs. When people don't feel hunger, thirst or cold, their needs are go to a second level. The second lowest level is **Security needs**. In that level a person needs to feel secure in his/her family and in a society, and feel protected against violence. The need for safety is manifested with job security, savings and for insurances of health, mental health, old age and disability. **Love and belonging needs** is the third level of Maslow's hierarchy. After feeling secure, people need to feel that they receive and give love, they are appreciated and they have good friendships. The fourth level is **Esteem needs**. It is the need to be unique with self-respect and to enjoy esteem from other individuals. People want to evaluate themselves highly and based on their achievement receive appreciation from other people. Lack of these needs may cause inferiority, helplessness and weakness. Highest level of Maslow's hierarchy of needs is **need of Self-actualization**. The development of this need is based on the satisfaction at the other four lower levels. It refers to the need of self-fulfillment and to the tendency to become actualized in what a person has potential.



The core of this theory lies in the fact that when one need is fulfilled, its strength diminishes and the strength of the next level increases. (Latham 2007, 31) Maslow does note that one level of needs doesn't have to be totally fulfilled before a person moves to the next level. The individual can be partly satisfied with one level and still seek for satisfaction at the next level. (Salanova & Kirmanen, 2010)

Herzberg Motivation/Hygiene Theory

Herzberg's motivation/hygiene theory is also known as the two-factor theory. Herzberg started the study of job satisfaction in the 1950's in Pittsburg. The basis of Herzberg's work is in the Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. He started with the idea that what causes the job satisfaction are the opposite of those things that cause job dissatisfaction. However, after studying thousands of books he couldn't draw any guidelines. He conducted a survey where he asked participants to identify those things that made them feel positive with their job and those that made them feel negative. As a result Herzberg found out that what makes people happy is what they do or the way they're utilized and what makes people unhappy is the way they're treated. Things that make people satisfied at work are different from those that cause dissatisfaction so those two feelings can't be opposite. Based on these findings Herzberg created his theory of Motivators and Hygiene factors. Both factors can motivate workers but they work for different reasons. Hygiene factors tend to cause only short-term satisfaction to the workers while motivators most probably cause longer-term job satisfaction.

Motivators

Motivators, or satisfiers, are those factors that cause feelings of satisfaction at work. These factors motivate by changing the nature of the work. They challenge a person to develop their talents and fulfill their potential. For example adding responsibility to work and providing learning opportunities to a person to work at a higher level can lead to a positive performance growth in every task a person is expected to do if the possible poor results are related to boredom of the task they are supposed to accomplish. Motivators are those that come from intrinsic feelings. In addition to responsibility and learning opportunities also recognition, achievement, advancement and growth are motivation factors. These factors don't dissatisfy if they are not present but by giving value to these, satisfaction level of the employees is most probably going to grow. (Bogardus 2007, 34) When hygiene factors are maintained, dissatisfaction can be avoided. When, on the other hand, dissatisfaction is most probable to occur, motivation can't take place.

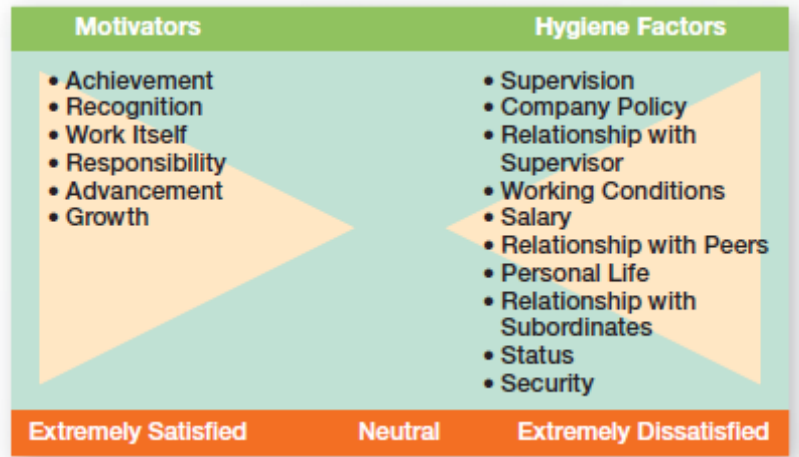


Figure: Herzberg's Two Factor Theory

Hygiene Factors

Hygiene factors, or dissatisfiers, are those that the employee expects to be in good condition. As motivators are those that at present cause satisfaction, hygiene factors are those that don't cause satisfaction but if they are lacking, it causes job dissatisfaction. Salaries or wages must be equivalent to those salaries that other people in the same industry or geographical area get. The status of the person must be recognized and maintained. Employees must feel that their job is as secured as it is possible in the current economical situation. The working conditions should be clean, sufficiently lit and safe in other way. Sufficient amount of fringe benefits like health, pension and child care must be provided and compensation in general equivalent to the amount of work done. Policies and administrative practices such as flex hours, dress code, vacation schedules and other scheduling affect workers and should be run efficiently. These factors relate to the content of the work and if they are in proper form, it tends to eliminate job dissatisfaction. (Ellis 2005, 83). The main finding of Herzberg is that the opposite of satisfaction is not dissatisfaction but no satisfaction. (Salanova & Kirmanen, 2010)

Expectancy Theory

The concept of expectancy was originally formulated by Vroom and it stands for the probability that action or effort will lead to an outcome. The concept of expectancy was defined in more detail by Vroom as follows: "Where an individual chooses between alternatives which involve uncertain outcomes, it seems clear that his behavior is affected not only by his preferences among these outcomes but also by the degree to which he believes these outcomes to be possible. Expectancy is defined as momentary belief concerning the likelihood that a particular act will be followed by a particular outcome. Expectancies may be described in terms of their strength. Maximal strength is indicated by subjective certainty that the act will be followed by outcome, while minimal strength is indicated by the subjective certainty that the act will not be followed by the outcome." (Vroom, 1964)

Motivation in this case is likely when a clearly perceived and usable relationship exists between performance and outcome, and the outcome is seen as a means of satisfying needs. It suggests that there are two factors determining the effort people put in their jobs. The first is the value of the rewards to individuals, and the extent to which these rewards satisfy their needs for security, social esteem, autonomy, and self-actualization. The second is the probability that the rewards depend on the effort, as perceived by individuals, their expectations about relationship between effort and reward. Thus, the greater the value of a set of the awards and the higher the probability that receiving each of these rewards depends upon effort, the greater the effort will be in a given situation. (Armstrong 2006, 259-260)

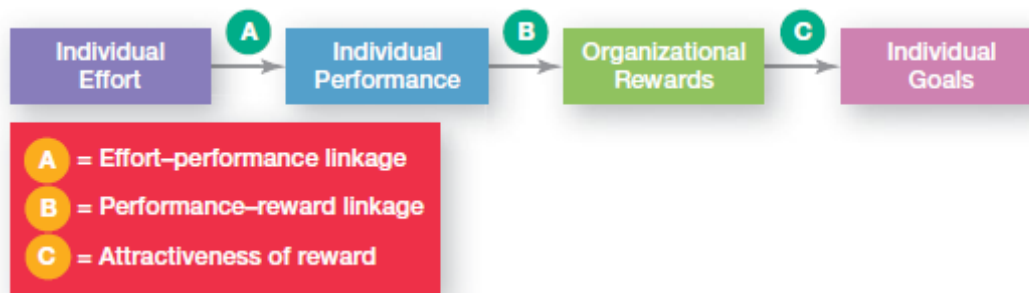


Figure: Expectancy Model

Fundamental to all the popular theories of motivation is the notion that employees are motivated to perform better when offered something they want, something they believe will be satisfying. However, offering the employees something they believe will be satisfying is necessary, but not enough. They must believe that it is possible to achieve what they want. Employees are not motivated to perform better when managers focus on the “offering” and ignore the “believing”. Employee’s confidence that they will get what they want involves three separate and distinct beliefs. The first belief is that they can perform well enough to get what is offered. The second is that they will get it if they perform well. The third belief is that what is offered will be satisfying. Each of these three beliefs deals with what employees think will happen if they put effort to perform. The first belief deals with the relationship between effort and performance, the second with the relationship between performance and outcomes, and the third with the relationship between outcomes and satisfaction. All these beliefs are interrelated because an employee effort leads to some level of performance, the performance leads to outcomes, and the outcomes lead to some amount of satisfaction or dissatisfaction. In conclusion, the Expectancy theory of motivation requires the fulfillment of the following conditions: employees are motivated to perform only when they believe that effort will lead to performance, performance will lead to outcomes, and the outcomes will lead to satisfaction. (Green 1992, 1-4)

Effort-to-performance expectancy is the starting point in the implementation of the Expectancy theory. It is a person's perception of the probability that effort will lead to successful performance. If we believe our effort will lead to higher performance, this expectancy is very strong, then we are certain that the outcome will occur. If we believe our performance will be the same no matter how much effort we make, our expectancy is very low, meaning that there is no probability that the outcome will occur. A person who thinks there is a moderate relationship between effort and subsequent performance has an adequate expectancy, and thus put maximum effort in the performance. The next stage in the Expectancy theory is performance-to-outcome expectancy, which is a person's perception of the probability that performance will lead to certain other outcomes. If a person thinks a high performer is certain to get a pay raise, this expectancy is high. On the other hand, a person who believes raises are entirely independent of the performance has a low expectancy. Thus, if a person thinks performance has some bearing on the prospects for a pay raise, his or her expectancy is adequate. In a work setting, several performance-to-outcome expectancies are relevant because several outcomes might logically result from performance. Each outcome, then, has its own expectancy. The final stage in the expectancy linkage is named outcomes and valences. An outcome is anything that might potentially result from performance. High level performance conceivably might produce such outcomes as a pay raise, a promotion, recognition from the boss, fatigue, stress, or less time to rest, among others. The valence of an outcome is the relative attractiveness or unattractiveness of that outcome to the person. Pay raises, promotion, and recognition might all have positive valences, whereas fatigue, stress, and less time to rest might all have negative valences. The stress of outcome valences varies from person to person. Work-related stress may be a significant negative factor for one person but only a slight annoyance for someone desperately in need of money, a slight positive valence for someone interested mostly in getting promotion or, for someone in an unfavorable tax position, even a negative valence. The basic expectancy framework suggests that three conditions must be met before motivated behavior occurs. (Griffin 2007, 98-100)

Behavioral scientists generally agree that the expectancy theory of motivation represents the most comprehensive, valid and useful approach to understanding motivation. However, it does not end with only understanding, it is also important to be able to motivate people to perform. In this regard, the Expectancy theory generally has been considered quite difficult to apply. This is no longer true, as there are many application models that have been developed over the years and which are quite simple and straightforward. (Green 1992, 8). (Salanova & Kirmanen, 2010)

Evaluating Different Era of Motivational Theories

Basically motivation will drive a person's behavior in such a particular way that will achieve organizational goals as well as individual employee's benefits. So going through the different era's of motivational theories – that is early theories of motivation (Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and Herzberg Motivation/Hygiene theory) and the contemporary theories of motivation (Expectancy theory) (Management, Robbins – 12 Edition), we are trying to find out the common ground of motivational theories of different era from critical point of view and seeking out what they basically do or is there any form of differences or not among them.

Motivating employees is one of the important issues in every aspect of any organizational environment. The overall performance of an organization surely depends on the motivated workers of the company. That is why Human Resource Management is highly concentrating on this matter. In any case of the motivational theory some common ground or procedure should be followed that are we have to define or specify the performance or to what extent an employee should show his or her performance. The specific performance should be assessed through a mechanism and it should be defined earlier. After that there should be proper working environment within the organization and adequate resources should be provided to the employees to get the job done. Getting the right people in the right place and setting them in accordance is also a challenge for any motivational theory. After that management should concentrate on the reward system which should be fair, transparent and equal for the same level of employees. And they should specify about the types of reward system they are going to use within the organization. So these are the common aspects we can find out in any sorts of motivational system or methods.

Conclusion

In the end we can say that motivation is the mechanism which ultimately influences people or employees to behave in certain ways. And in any kind of organization whether it is charitable or service oriented or manufacturing organization always management has to concern about motivational issue, along with environmental or ability factors, that determines the individual performance. And individual performance is very much connected with the productivity or output of the organization. Here in this write-up we are trying to find out the common ground of the early and contemporary theories of motivation which ultimately helps us to better implication of motivational theories in practical scenario. And successful implementation of the theory will definitely ensure positive minded employees and which ultimately ensures the success of an organization. So motivation is one of the vital factors for development of an organization. Motivation can change the profit figure of the organization such as its improving productivity. And in the end, it ensures the betterment of the overall economic condition of a county.

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