

## **Integrating The Factors of Employee Motivation Theories**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Motivation is part of the leadership behaviour of managers to create the right working environment that inspires, empowers, encourages, rewards, and makes the work of their colleagues interesting. This creates a sense of accomplishment and self-confidence in employees, which increases their interest in continuous effort and high performance that contributes to the achievement of the organization's strategic goals.*

*The literature shows that there is no generally accepted theory of motivation as to what exactly motivates people to give maximum effort at work.*

*In the context of this problematic, the purpose of this article is to examine the possibility of integrating the determinants of the various motivation theories into a model that brings together the main features of the contemporary concept of employee motivation.*

*The investigation revealed that Vroom's expectancy theory can be used as a basis for creating a model that links the main determinants of different motivation theories.*

**Keywords:** motivation, motivation theories, employee behaviour, motivational factors, human resources, employee performance

## **1. Introduction**

Motivation is a prominent concept in the field of management, which several researchers have tried to define it theoretically and confirm it empirically. Motivation can be considered to be the procedures-processes that explain the intensity, direction and persistence of an individual's efforts to achieve individual and business goals (Blanchard et al., 1999).

The objective of the motivational theories formulated to date is to identify the factors that activate and guide the thoughts and behaviour of employees to achieve predetermined goals. The effectiveness of the application of any motivation theory depends, in addition to other factors, among other factors, on the organizational culture of the companies and on the type of employees to whom it is to be applied (Jacobs, & Sopiah, 2023).

Employees' efforts to achieve business goals include three main parameters: vigour which is a measure of intensity or drive, direction which is related to the setting of goals for satisfaction (behaviour that benefits both companies) and persistence which is related to the degree of effort employees put into achieving their goals (Holden, 1998, Qadir, et al., 2017).

The fundamental reason for the existence of human labour is the satisfaction of individual needs in the order of priority set by each individual. The number and type of needs determine the degree of effort each individual puts into satisfying them. The intensity of human needs motivates individuals to intensify the work they offer to satisfy their needs more effectively (Ali, & Ahmed, 2009; Shagvaliyeva, & Yazdanifard, 2014). The motivating forces vary considerably not only from person to person but also over time in the same person. The nature and content of the work itself performed by the employee influences the degree of motivation. The development of motivation systems is effective when employees possess a minimum level of knowledge and skills.

An important issue that has concerned researchers is the origin of motivation. Opinions do not converge in one direction. There are theoretical approaches such as those of Maslow (1943) and Herzberg (1959) that argued how motivation is an internal matter of each individual. In contrast to these, Adair (1983) proposed the fifty-fifty rule according to which motivation comes half from internal factors (from the individual) and half from external factors (charismatic leadership). In any case, these factors can be classified into subcategories and provide a theoretical approach to the reasons for motivating individuals.

Motivation is not only innate but is a dynamic process that develops through learning. Considering that very few people have a naturally high sense of duty, responsibility, obedience, conscientiousness, creativity, activism, ambition, etc. that lead them to adapt and adopt the

leader's vision and goals and act in that direction, the majority of individuals achieve goals through motivation given to achieve them (Ernst Kossek, et al, 2012).

The purpose of this article is to provide a brief critical evaluation of the main theoretical approaches that explain the process and determinants of employee motivation and to examine the possibility of integrating them into a model that brings together the main features of the contemporary concept of motivation.

## **2. Theories of Employee Motivation**

Regarding motivation, the theories that have been formulated over time can be categorized into four groups (Kinicki, *et al*, 2021): content motivation theories, process motivation theories, job enrichment theories and empowerment motivation theories, as follows:

- Content motivation theories focus on the needs that motivate people. Needs are defined as physical or psychological deficits that cause behaviors. This category includes Maslow's (1943) early hierarchy of needs theory, Aldefer's (1969) theory, McClelland's (1985) theory of acquired needs, and Herzberg's (1959) two-factor theory. The goal of these theories is to understand the needs of employees.
- Process motivation theories are interested in the mental processes through which people decide to act. This category includes justice-equality theory, expectancy theory, and goal-setting theory. The goal of these theories is to understand why employees have different needs, what kinds of behaviors they choose to satisfy, and how they decide whether their choices have been successful.
- Job enrichment theories focus on designing jobs with quantitative and qualitative features that attract and lead employees to increase performance and job satisfaction. Included in this category is the job characteristics model of Hackman and Oldham (1976).
- Theories of empowerment incentives which advocate giving employees authority and responsibilities in relation to their work within guidelines to achieve the business objectives.

Each theory contributes to general scientific research and, in particular, to the understanding of the phenomenon of employee motivation. However, each theoretical approach has been criticized for its weaknesses and omissions. In particular:

- Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs theory argues that individuals move up the hierarchy pyramid of five needs (biological, safety, social, esteem and self-actualization) when the needs at each level are adequately met. The needs of the lowest level are mainly met by

the external environment, while the needs of the higher levels are met by the internal environment. Criticism of this theory focuses on the fact that it is a simple theory without empirical evidence-evidence from Maslow. Subsequent research (Hall, & Nougaim, 1968; Nevis, 1983; Rowan, 1998) has shown that the human needs theory is not universally valid, in that not all workers progress from one need to another in a hierarchical order, which means that there remains a large stock of work capabilities unused. This provides an opportunity for managers to utilize the skills and abilities of their employees in creative ways, thereby influencing their work behaviours to achieve business objectives.

- McGregor's (1960) X and Y theory argues that to maximize employee motivation, theory Y practices should be used which involve employees in decision-making, create responsible and challenging roles, and encourage positive relations between team members. Criticism of this theory focuses on the fact that there is no evidence to support either set of hypotheses or that the only way to motivate is to apply theory Y.
- Herzberg's (1959) two-factor motivation-hygiene theory argues that intrinsic factors (i.e. motivation) are related to job satisfaction and motivation, while extrinsic factors (i.e. hygiene) are related to job dissatisfaction. The factors leading to job satisfaction are different and distinct from those responsible for feelings of dissatisfaction. The idea is that job satisfaction and the resulting dissatisfaction are not the two ends of a vector but are two separate parallel dimensions. Criticisms of this theory focus on the fact that it is too simplistic and that job content-related factors lead to improved performance. This theory has received a great deal of scientific support and has influenced modern job design theory.
- McClelland's (1985) theory of acquired needs fulfillment argues that the needs that determine the level of motivation of individuals in the workplace are acquired and are acquired throughout their lives. These needs are the main motivators at work and are: (a) the need to achieve goals, (b) the need for power, and (c) the need to develop relationships. The criticism levelled at this theory is that it does not sufficiently describe the complexity of the process of motivating individuals in the workplace.
- Alderfer's (1969) Existence-Relationship and Growth (E.R.G.) theory of needs is a theory of human needs that assumes that people have three basic sets of needs (existence, relationships, and growth) that are motivating and can operate simultaneously. This theory has practical value because it reminds managers of the types of enablers or rewards that can act as motivators for people. Criticism of this theory focuses on the fact that it does not identify what is most important in meeting human needs. It also does not

help to understand the heterogeneity of ever-changing human needs, nor the strength of these needs at certain times.

- Locke's (1968) theory of goal setting argues that specific goals increase performance, while difficult goals, when accepted, yield higher performance than easy goals. The intention to work towards difficult and specific goals is a powerful motivational force, which under the right circumstances, can lead to higher performance and possibly job satisfaction. The criticism made of this theory is that goal setting is not expected to bring about increased employee performance in countries where different cultural characteristics exist. Also, there is concern in cases of individuals with low self-efficacy, who may show a decline after negative feedback regarding the progress of performing a particular task.
- Hackman and Oldham's (1976) model of job characteristics argues that there are five fundamental job dimensions (skill variety, task identity, task importance, autonomy and feedback) used in job design that influence three critical psychological states (job importance, responsibility for results and knowledge of results), which in turn promote employee motivation and satisfaction. The job characteristics model offers important guidance to managers in making decisions regarding how to carry out the job tasks of individuals and teams, and for high performance achieved by vertical job expansion (job enrichment), i.e., by adding planning and evaluation tasks. Employees with jobs that have the necessary information, knowledge, authority, and rewards related to job content (motivational factors) feel empowered. The criticism levelled at this model is that it has not garnered acceptance in academia due to conflicting research results.
- Adams' (1965) theory of equality argues that people compare the ratio of their own outputs to their inputs with the ratio of a particular person. If the ratios are equal, then people believe that the relationship is equal or fair. Thus, with reference to personal data and taking into account the underlying factors (i.e., outcomes and inputs), an individual's perceptions of fairness-equity can lead to either satisfaction or dissatisfaction at work. Criticisms of this theory focus on the fact that if people feel that they are not receiving fair rewards, then they may become dissatisfied and reduce their effort and that employees view their rewards on a social or interpersonal comparative basis rather than in terms of the absolute amount of rewards. Furthermore, the concept of fairness involves a significant degree of subjective element and is determined by the perceptions of the individual.
- Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory argues that an individual tends to act in a certain way, based on the expectation that his action will bring about a given outcome and the

attractiveness of the reward of that outcome. Expectancy is employees' perception of the likelihood that their efforts will make it easier for them to achieve their goals. The theory emphasizes expected behaviors and gives particular emphasis to perceptions. The key to expectancy theory is an understanding of the individual's goal and the relationship between effort and performance, between performance and rewards, and finally between rewards and individual satisfaction due to goal attainment. An evolution of this theory is Porter and Lawler's (1968) multivariate model of motivation that includes all three variables used by Vroom. The criticism of this theory is that it is limited to conditions in which individuals have the required skill, accurate role perception and the ability to accurately calculate rewards that determine performance, which is not always valid.

- Deci and Ryan's (1985) theory of self-determination posits that psychological mechanisms create the background of mainly autonomous internal motivation that drives individuals to develop creative initiatives in the workplace. However, the theory has been subject to criticism on the grounds that the two forms of motivation that constitute it (i.e. the internal one expressing autonomous motivation and the external one expressing dependent motivation) often conflict. Skinner's (1974) theory of functional addiction posits that a behaviour that produces positive effects is likely to be repeated, whereas a behaviour that produces negative effects is unlikely to be repeated. This theory has been subjected to significant criticism, primarily due to its failure to consider the internal processes of an organism and the influence of the subject's own perception of stimuli. Additionally, numerous researchers have questioned the applicability of Skinner's findings derived from animal studies to human behaviour.
- Empowerment theory (Kinlaw, 1995) aims to empower employees and tries to explain behaviour change by arguing that behaviours with positive outcomes tend to be repeated, while behaviours with unpleasant outcomes tend not to be repeated. Reinforcement is anything that results in a behavior being repeated or prevented. The criticism levelled at this theory is that there is no mention of the conscious process associated with empowerment and that the effectiveness of its implementation depends, among other things, on the type of employee (e.g. self-motivated or indifferent) that is to be implemented.

The presentation and critique of motivation theories revealed a multitude of factors and variables that influence the process of employee motivation. These include the willingness of employees to offer their psychosomatic forces in order to achieve high performance, which can lead them to desired behaviour.

The question that must be addressed is "Which variables/factors need to be influenced so that the employee wants and is able to perform better?" It is important to note that there is no exact answer to this question. The theories presented highlight individual motivational factors that are taken into account by business managers in the process of drawing up a plan and implementation for employee motivation. However, there is no commonly accepted theory that incorporates the important variables that influence job performance.

From the above analysis, it can be concluded that the existing motivation theories complement each other which could lead the determinants to unify them into a model that brings together the main features of the modern perception of employee motivation. Such a model might address the current issues related to the financial situation, the management of intercultural challenges, specific groups of employees, appropriate employee reward programmes and the rapid technological developments of modern socio-economic reality.

### **3. A Proposed Model for the Integration of the Factors of Employee Motivation**

In the contemporary business environment, the forces of globalization, intense competition, continuous mergers and acquisitions, technological development, uncertainty, high demands of customers and other stakeholders, create new data that affect the way businesses operate, the forms of work and, consequently, significantly differentiate the role of human resources management.

In order to achieve modern multifaceted business objectives, it is necessary to couple various motivation theories into a theoretical background that brings together the main factors that constitute each theory and influence the motivation of employees. This theoretical background should also include a flexible way (style) of leadership that responds to the current economic situation and in relation to a model of Strategic Human Resource Management that creates a competitive advantage in the company.

To this end, Figure 1 presents a model that integrates many elements from the various motivational theories developed to date, which is based on Vroom's expectancy theory.

Vroom's expectancy theory argues that an employee makes a great effort when he or she perceives that there is a strong relationship between individual effort and performance (expectancy), performance and rewards (functionality), and rewards and satisfaction of individual/personal goals (vigour). The final relationship in Vroom's expectancy theory is the rewards-goals relationship.

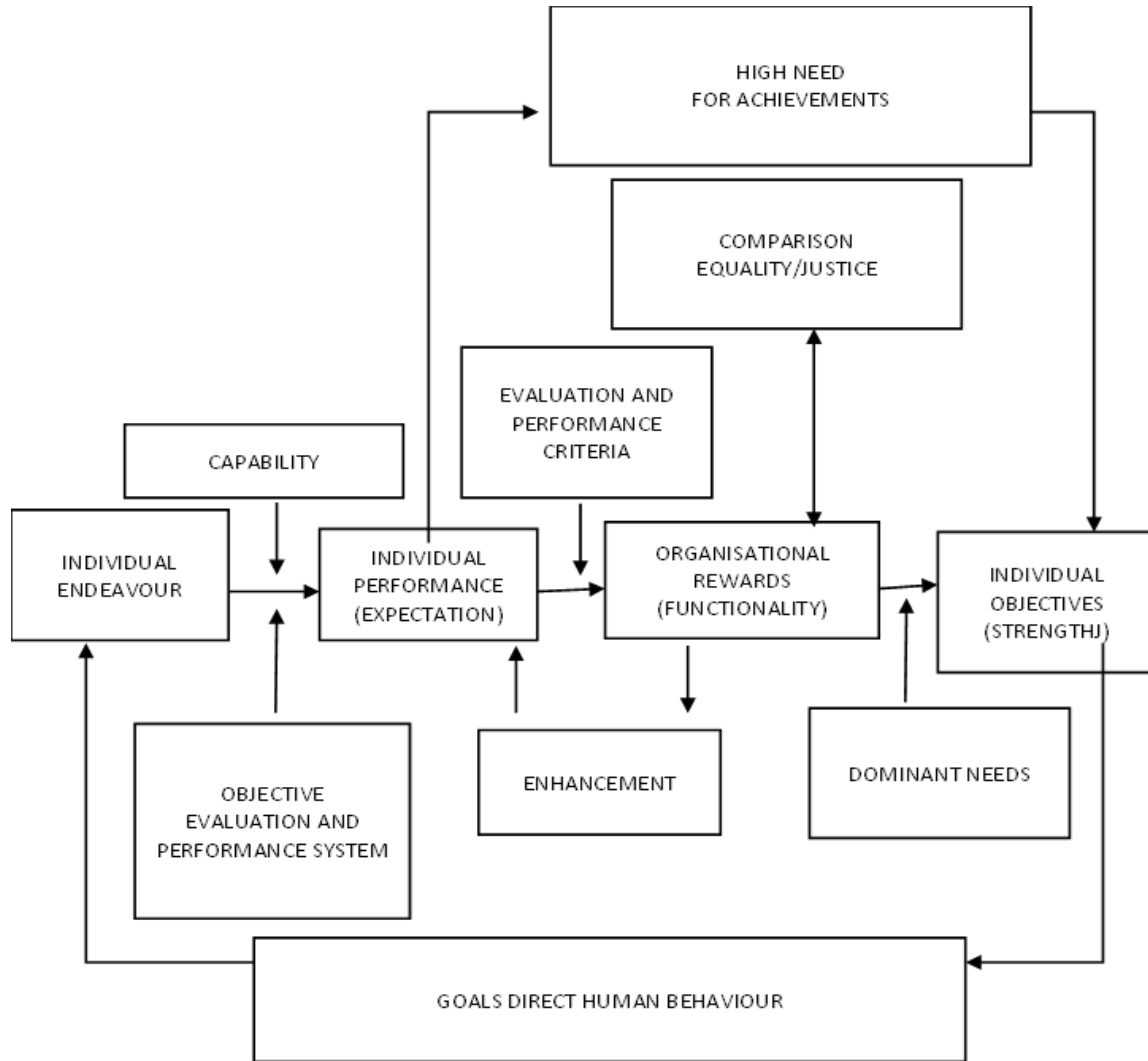
Specifically, the proposed model for the coupling of employee motivation factors based on Vroom's expectations theory is documented as follows:



- The traditional theories of needs (Maslow, Alderfer and McClelland) are verified in the model, in that motivation will be high to the extent that the rewards an employee earns for high performance influence their work behaviours, satisfy any needs that are consistent with individual goals, power acquisition and relationship development.
- Herzberg's two-factor theory is identified in the model, as intrinsic and extrinsic factors influence work behavior and performance, as well as job design.
- Locke's theory of goal setting in the context of "individual effort", the goal-effort relationship makes it clear that specific goals direct behaviour and are an important source of motivation for higher performance.
- Skinner's functional addiction theory is identified in the model as the firm/organization's rewards reinforce responsive and functional behavior and encourage the individual's performance or continued good performance.
- Empowerment theory is identified in the model, as the employee's improved performance is rewarded by the firm, so the employee is empowered and tends to change his/her human behaviour, continuing to work faster to achieve the firm's goals (i.e. a behavioural change occurs).
- McGregor's X and Y theories are identified in the model, as human nature, and particularly through theory Y, expresses positive consent to work engagement, participation in decision making and the creation of responsible and demanding jobs.
- Adams' theory of equality is located in the model, in that individuals compare the rewards (outputs) they received thanks to inputs or efforts made with the output-input ratio of other persons in similar positions.
- Deci and Ryan's theory of self-determination is identified in the model either in relation to basic needs or in relation to the autonomous disposition (inner motivation) that is the driving force for people to develop both their perspectives and their relationships with their fellow human beings.
- Hackman and Oldham's job characteristics theory is traced in the integrative model, as the characteristics of the goal (job design) influence vocational training, in that the five job dimensions will enhance the performance effort relationship and the design of jobs based on the five dimensions provide autonomy, feedback, allow the employee to control more key elements of their work and contribute to the satisfaction of individual goals, for greater control over their work, and to the achievement of their individual goals.



**Figure 1: Model for the integration of the factors of employee motivation theories**



Source: Dimitriou, (1989:518) & Lagou (2024)

Therefore, based on the proposed model of employee motivation we have four main elements: individual effort, individual performance, organizational rewards, and individual goals. Among these elements there is a strong relationship between individual effort and individual performance (aspiration), individual performance and rewards (functionality), and rewards and satisfaction of individual/personal goals (vigour). Each of these relationships is influenced by different factors linked to employee motivation theories. Thus, in order to lead an individual to high individual performance, it is necessary to have the required ability to perform a specific task (Hackman and Oldham's job characteristics theory, Herzberg's two-factor theory), as well as the

performance appraisal system, which must be considered fair and objective (Adams' equality theory). The final relationship in expectancy theory is the reward-individual goal relationship. Individual goals based on goal-setting theory (goal setting) remind us of the assumption that work behavior is driven by individual goals for the fulfillment of which individual effort must be made (Desi and Ryan's self-determination theory). The performance-reward relationship will be strong if the individual understands that it is performance according to the criteria of evaluation alone that determines the rewards of these needs-motives and not other criteria unrelated to performance. The latter relationship which is the link between organizational rewards and individual goals according to traditional needs theories (Maslow, Alderfer and McClelland) and Skinner's functional addiction theory, motivation will be as high as the rewards individuals receive for high performance satisfy their dominant needs, so that the satisfaction of their individual goals will bring about satisfaction. Individuals with a high need for achievement are not satisfied with the rewards of the firm, hence the direct link in the scheme of individual performance and individual goals. This is because individuals with a high need for achievement are internally motivated and to the extent that their work provides individual responsibility, feedback and moderate risk and are not interested in the performance-rewards and rewards-goals correlation (McGregor's Y theory). However, in modern conditions, employees' basic needs are no longer a meaningful source of motivation, as employees are motivated more through Maslow's "higher needs", such as those focused on empowerment (e.g. feelings of autonomy, achievement, esteem, self-esteem, etc.). Thus, the integrative model emphasizes that rewards from the organization for work accomplished enhances individual performance. If management has designed a reward system that rewards good performance, then rewards will have a positive effect and encourage continued good performance. Rewards play the key role in Adams' equality theory in that the employee compares what he or she offers and what he or she receives.

The proposed model of employee motivation is believed to encourage business managers to create a competitive environment for human resources. This is achieved by recognizing the needs and individual differences of employees, matching them with specific roles, using job objectives and their feedback, linking rewards to performance, and checking the system for equity and fairness.

#### **4. Conclusions**

Theories of motivation posit that motivation is an internal process that directs human behavior towards organizational goals. The fulfillment of individual needs of employees depends on the achievement of these goals. This process is based on the basic assumptions that human behaviour is goal-oriented and that needs or motivation are the reasons for this behaviour. These assumptions include the parameters of energeticness, which is a measure of the intensity or drive

of employees, direction that benefits the company and employees, and persistence to achieve business goals.

The predominant approaches to employee motivation have hitherto concentrated on either the content of work (Maslow, McGregor, Herzberg, Atkinson and McClelland theories), the process of motivation (Vroom, Porter/Lawler theories), job enrichment (Hackman and Oldham theories) or empowerment motivation (Skinner theory).

The preceding analysis demonstrates that none of the aforementioned theories is sufficiently comprehensive to account for the intricacies of the process of motivating individuals in the workplace. Furthermore, none of the theories can illuminate the phenomenon of employee motivation. However, the existing theories of employee motivation are mutually reinforcing, and this is a crucial aspect that can harness the determinants of each theory and unify them into a theoretical framework (model) that integrates the principal elements of the contemporary understanding of employee motivation.

It is considered that expectancy theory provides the most widely accepted explanation of employee motivation, as it points out that the intensity of an individual's tendency to behave in a certain way depends on the intensity of an expectation that the action will be followed by an outcome (reward) and on the attractiveness of the outcome for the individual.

Vroom's expectancy theory serves as the foundation for the proposed model, which demonstrates a robust correlation between individual effort and individual performance (expectancy), individual performance and rewards (functioning), and rewards and the satisfaction of individual/personal goals (vigour). Each of these relationships is influenced by a range of factors associated with the various theories of employee motivation that have been proposed to date.

The integrated view of motivation in the proposed model influences the organizational climate, the applied leadership styles and managerial practices of executives and enables business executives to better understand the phenomenon of motivation, so that they can more easily create a motivational environment for human resources that links business strategy with performance.

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