

## MOTIVATION

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**Objectives:**

This unit will help you to understand:

- The importance of motivation
- The classification of motives
- The content theories of work motivation
- The process theories of work motivation
- The contemporary theories of work motivation

**Introduction**

Motivation is a psychological phenomenon and is regarded as the cause of behavior. Understanding motivation helps in understanding individual behavior. Motivation along with perception, learning, personality, and attitudes helps in analyzing human behavior. In an organizational set-up, managers need to motivate employees to ensure greater commitment on the part of employees. But the motivation levels of individuals differ according to situations. In fact, every individual has different motivational factors in different situations. Hence, it would be incorrect to assume that certain individuals are always lazy and reluctant to work. Motivation is constituted by elements such as needs, drives, and incentives. Knowledge about these elements helps in understanding motivation.

**Definitions of Motivation**

Different theorists and practitioners of management have defined motivation in different ways. The term motivation is derived from the Latin word 'movere' which means 'to move.'

According to Stephen P. Robbins, motivation is "the willingness to exert high levels of effort toward organizational goals, conditioned by the effort's ability to satisfy some individual need."

Motivation is a condition which causes a certain behavior in an individual to achieve certain goals, and is initiated by physiological or psychological deficiency or need in an individual.

Needs, drives, and incentives are the elements of motivation. Needs are the basis for drives, which in turn, form the basis for achieving incentives.

**Needs**

Need is created by a physiological or psychological imbalance. Psychological needs may arise sometimes without any deficiency or imbalance. For instance, people who have a strong need to progress may strive continuously to achieve more even when there are considered to be fairly successful by others.

**Drives**

Drives, also called motives, push individuals to satisfy their needs or to reach their goals. Hence, we can consider drives as an important element of motivation. Existing needs push individuals to achieve goals by transforming themselves into drives. For example, the need to achieve forms the basis for the achievement drive.

**Incentives**

Incentives lessen the strength of drives and alleviate needs. Physiological or psychological balance is brought back by incentives. For example, eating reduces the hunger need. Here, food acts as the incentive.

**Classification of Motives**

Psychologists have classified motives into:

**Primary Motives**

A motive which is physiologically based and not learned can be termed as a primary motive. As all human beings have the same basic physiological make-up, they all have the same primary needs. Some of the common primary motives are thirst, hunger, sleep, sex, avoidance of pain, etc. Although primary motives are considered to be more important than other motives, there are some theories of motivation in which secondary motives dominate primary motives in certain situations. For example, fasting for religious causes is an example where secondary motives are stronger than the primary motives.

**General Motives**

General motives are motives which are neither based on physiological needs nor learned over time. They cannot be classified as purely primary or purely secondary motives. General motives are also called 'stimulus motives' as they generate tension in individuals. Understanding general motives such as motives of curiosity, manipulation, motive to remain active, and motive to display affection help in understanding human behavior at work.

**The curiosity, manipulation, and activity motives**

Experiments conducted by psychologists on animals have found that the animals had a drive to explore new things and to manipulate objects or just be active. These drives were observed when monkeys were put in unfamiliar and novel situations. Psychologists later generalized the findings of these experiments to human beings. These motives are beneficial to human beings in encouraging innovation and avoiding stagnation. In an organization, if employees are not given the freedom to give expression to their curiosity, manipulation, and activity motives, their morale may be adversely affected.

**The affection motive**

The affection motive is placed in all the three categories of motives — Primary, general, and secondary. The nature of affection or love is a complex one to understand as it resembles primary motives in some ways and secondary motives in other ways. So, behavioral theorists treat the affection motive as a general motive as well as a primary or secondary motive in different contexts.

**Secondary Motives**

Secondary motives are the motives learned or acquired over time. They are significant in the study of organizational behavior as they help to understand motivation better. Secondary motives such as motives for power (nPow), achievement (nAch), affiliation (nAff), security, and motive for status help in the study of organizational behavior.

**The power motive**

Alfred Adler, a behavioral scientist and a close associate of Sigmund Freud, believed greatly in the strength of the power motive. He opposed the views of Freud, which emphasized the past and gave importance to the unconscious. Adler's theory placed more importance on the future and the drive in people to gain power and be superior to others. The concepts of 'competition' and 'inferiority complex' were used by Adler to explain the power motive. Adler believed that every child experienced a feeling of inferiority along with carrying an inherent need for superiority. The power motive is reflected in persons like politicians, businessmen, and others who use power and have a strong drive for power. It provides an explanation for different aspects of organizational behavior like leadership and political aspects.

**The achievement motive**

The achievement motive was identified much later than the power motive but substantial research has been carried out on the subject. The Thematic Apperception Test (TAT) is used to determine the achievement drive. As part of the test, people are shown a picture and asked to tell a story about what they see in it. Different people give different interpretations of the same picture and this helps in determining their motivational level. Research conducted by David C. McClelland, a Harvard psychologist, showed that the 'achievement motive is a person's desire to perform excellently or to handle complex or competitive situations successfully.' According to McClelland, persons with a low need for achievement take low risks or high risks whereas persons with a high need for achievement take moderate risks which challenge their abilities. Based on his research, McClelland said high achievers also had a need for prompt and precise feedback. Typically, they preferred to take up jobs related to sales or managerial posts, which gave immediate feedback on performance, and they tried to avoid taking up research-oriented jobs where feedback was inexact or given after a long time. They derived satisfaction with accomplishments rather than with material rewards. They were totally dedicated to their tasks and this was often reflected in their behavior, so much so that they were sometimes even considered unfriendly and reserved, which created an unfavorable impression about them. High achievers set realistic targets for themselves and tried to achieve them on their own. The sales profession would suit these people more than managerial jobs.

### **The affiliation motive**

People with a high affiliation motive are concerned about social relationships. For instance, employees working at the lower levels of the organization hierarchy tend to have a strong desire to be accepted by other employees or the group. Managers who are concerned about affiliation tend to maintain a congenial work environment. However, managers with an excessive affiliation motive may sometimes even compromise on the quality of work as they do not want to offend people working with them.

### **The security motive**

Security is a prime concern, specifically in technologically advanced societies. There is growing insecurity among people over maintaining relationships with family and friends, meeting loan repayment obligations, job security, etc. The security motive is oriented more toward avoiding fear than achieving security. It influences individuals to protect themselves from unfavorable developments that may prevent them from achieving their goals. There is also an unconscious and more complicated security motive, which differs from person to person. Employers mainly address the simple and conscious security motive of their employees by means of insurance policies, savings plans, and other benefits. It is considered that a greater understanding of the unconscious security motive is required to utilize the talents of people in an organization effectively.

### **The status motive**

Status is 'the rank a person holds relative to others within a group, organization, or society.' The status hierarchy surfaces when people are grouped together. In fact, these days, people are more concerned about material things like clothes, accessories, vehicles, cell phones, etc., which are associated with status. Status is influenced by the cultural values and the importance of different roles in a society. For instance, older people will have higher status in certain societies.

## **The Content Theories of Work Motivation**

The content theories of motivation deal with identifying and prioritizing the needs and drives of people which motivate them at work. These theories have limitations in explaining motivation and behavior at work successfully. They, however, deal with

different approaches for motivating people. Frederick W. Taylor, Frank Gilberth, and Henry L. Gantt were pioneers of the content theories and proposed the scientific management theory. This theory considered money as the only incentive. Subsequent content theories considered factors like working conditions and work security as incentives. The theories by Maslow, Herzberg, and Alderfer, propounded later, studied the possibility of satisfying 'higher level' needs as incentives.

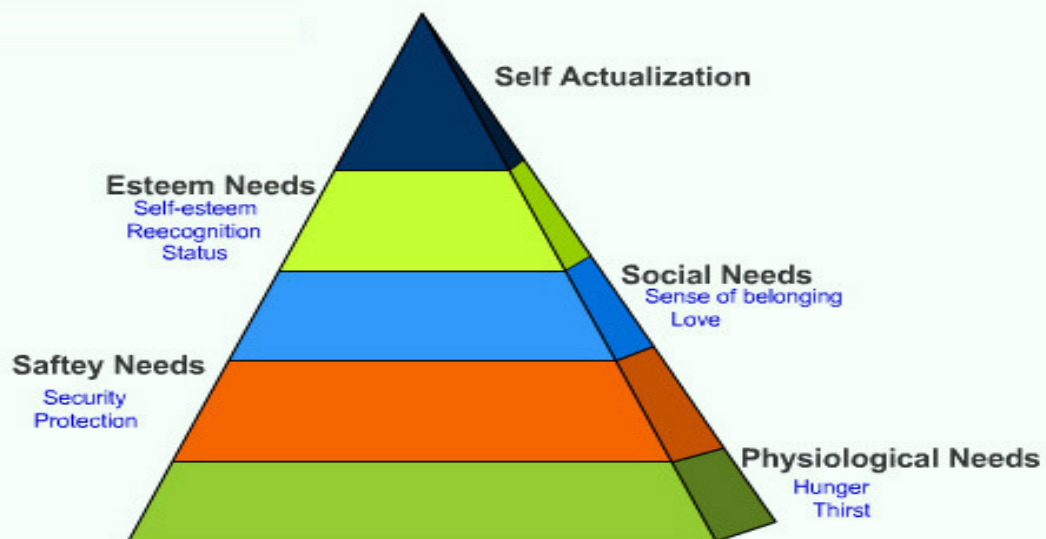
### **Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs**

Abraham Maslow proposed a theory of motivation based on his clinical experience. According to this theory, people had a hierarchy of needs and once the needs at a particular level were satisfied, they no longer acted as motivators. The hierarchy of needs proposed by Maslow consisted of physiological, safety, social or love needs, esteem needs, and self-actualization needs. Refer figure 8.1 A content model was developed by organizing needs in a hierarchy.

**Physiological Needs:** Physiological needs are similar to primary needs. These are the needs that are not learned. Needs like thirst, hunger, sleep, and sex are considered to be physiological needs. Once these needs are fulfilled, they cease to be motivators. For example, when a person is hungry, he searches for food. Once he has eaten, hunger ceases to be a motivator.

**Safety Needs:** An individual has a need for safety in life. The safety needs have both physical and emotional dimensions. They can be job security, safety regulations, and benefits like life insurance, etc.

**Social Needs:** People's need for belonging or love comes under social needs. These are similar to affiliation needs. After they are satisfied, these needs also cease to be motivators.



**Esteem Needs:** Esteem needs include need for power, achievement, and status. Developing self-esteem and obtaining respect from others are referred to as esteem needs.

**Self-actualization Needs:** These are at the highest level in the hierarchy of needs as given by Maslow. When people realize their full potential and fulfill it, they attain self-actualization.

Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory is accepted by many researchers and practitioners as relevant to motivation in the organizational setting. However, empirical study on theory is inadequate and Maslow himself modified his theory later. Stressing that

human behavior is determined by many factors; Maslow later said that satisfying the self-actualization need may cause it to increase rather than decrease.

### **Herzberg's Two-factor Theory of Motivation**

Frederick Herzberg developed the two-factor theory, which was an extension of Maslow's theory. Herzberg grouped the factors which influence work into hygiene factors and motivators. He then used the critical incident method to assess the job satisfaction or dissatisfaction of employees. He interviewed around 200 accountants and engineers employed by firms in and around Pittsburgh. Their attitude toward their jobs was determined through questions on incidents which had made them feel satisfied or dissatisfied with their jobs. Herzberg concluded that job satisfiers were associated with job content while job dissatisfiers were more related to job context. The important hygiene factors considered by Herzberg were administrative policies of the organization, presence of able supervisors, fair pay, good interpersonal relations, and encouraging working conditions. The significant motivators were the work itself, clear achievable goals, appreciation for good work, giving adequate responsibility to employees, and career growth. The hygiene factors are similar to the low-level needs in the hierarchy of needs proposed by Maslow, while the motivators are related to the higher-level needs of the hierarchy theory. However, Herzberg's two-factor theory described only certain aspects of work and failed to explain diverse factors of motivation at work.

### **Alderfer's ERG Theory**

Clayton Alderfer developed a theory on work motivation based on some empirical evidence. It was an extension to the theories proposed by Maslow and Herzberg. According to Alderfer, the three basic groups of needs are:

*Existence Needs:* Needs associated with the survival and physiological well-being of an individual are termed existence needs.

*Relatedness Needs:* These are the needs which emphasize social and interpersonal relationships.

*Growth Needs:* Needs related to a person's inner desire for personal growth and development are viewed as growth needs.

Based on these needs, Alderfer proposed the ERG theory. This theory disagreed with both Maslow's and Herzberg's theories that only fulfillment of lower level needs was responsible for triggering needs at a higher level. Alderfer proposed that the background and cultural environment of a person caused an increase in the degree of relatedness needs over existence needs. It was also possible that the intensity of growth needs would increase with an increase in the degree to which they were satisfied. The ERG theory includes points from other content theories proposed by Maslow and Herzberg but has fewer limitations than those theories. Many contemporary analysts support the ERG theory rather than other content theories. However, content theories in general do not give an explanation for the complexities involved in the process of motivation.

## **The Process Theories of Work Motivation**

The content theories concentrate on 'what' motivates people at work. The process theories, on the other hand, deal with 'how' to motivate people at work. The process theories like Vroom's Expectancy Theory and the Porter-Lawler model deal with the influence of a person's background on motivation.

### **Vroom's Expectancy Theory of Motivation**

Victor Vroom proposed a theory for work motivation. The theory was based on the cognitive concepts proposed by psychologists like Kurt Lewin and Edward Tolman, and the utility concepts and choice behavior from the classical economic theory. Vroom

wanted to provide an explanation for the complex process of work, which content theories could not provide. The theory depended on three variables -- valence, instrumentality, and expectancy.

Valence represents the strength of an individual's preference for a particular outcome. The valence is said to be positive if a person prefers attaining a particular outcome over not attaining it; it is said to be zero if the person is not interested in the outcome; and negative if the person prefers not attaining the outcome to attaining it.

Instrumentality refers to an individual's perception of the degree to which a first-level outcome helps to attain the desired second-level outcome. Instrumentality is an input for valence.

The third variable, expectancy, is the probability that performing a specific action would produce a particular first-level outcome or effort. It ranges from zero to one.

The strength of the motivation to perform a certain act depends on the algebraic sum of the products of valence and instrumentality times the expectancy. Thus, Vroom's theory identifies the relationships between effort-performance, performance-reward, and rewards-personal goals. Though Vroom's Expectancy theory helps in understanding organizational behavior, it does not contribute directly to the techniques of motivating people at work.

### **The Porter-Lawler Model**

Many earlier researchers in human resources believed that an employee's satisfaction has a direct impact on his/her performance. Later, many studies found that the relationship between levels of satisfaction and productivity was remote. Porter-Lawler model developed by Lyman W. Porter and Edward E. Lawler III is an extension of Vroom's theory to explain the complex relationship between motivation, satisfaction, and performance.

#### **Important variables in the model**

The important variables in the Porter-Lawler model are effort, performance, rewards, and satisfaction.

**Effort:** Effort is the amount of energy individuals use to perform a particular task. The effort put in by employees is related to the attractiveness of the reward and their perception about the probability of their getting the reward. Motivation drives individuals to put in an effort to perform a task.

**Performance:** The *performance* of employees depends not only on their effort but also on their abilities, skills, and their perception about their role in completing a task. For example, if employees put in extra effort in the job without possessing the required abilities and skills it may not get them a promotion.

**Rewards:** Rewards are given to employees based on performance as per the Porter-Lawler model. Rewards can be intrinsic or extrinsic in nature. Intrinsic rewards are rewards in the form of happiness or satisfaction on completing a task. They are self-rewarded i.e., they are self-derived. Extrinsic rewards are given by the organization to employees in recognition of their work.

**Satisfaction:** Satisfaction, according to Porter and Lawler, was the result of the individuals' actual reward over perceived rewards. Dissatisfaction often results when the actual rewards fall short of the employees' expectations. Using these variables, Porter and Lawler tried to explain the complex nature of motivation at work.

## **The Contemporary Theories of Work Motivation**

### **Equity Theory**

The equity theory of work motivation was proposed by J. Stacy Adams. According to this theory, the performance and satisfaction of employees is influenced by the degree

of equity or inequity the employees perceive with reference to their work situation. Employees compare the inputs with the outputs. Inputs can be a person's experience, training, qualifications, personal characteristics, etc. Outcomes could be of various types like pay, fringe benefits, recognition, promotion, etc. A state of equity or inequity results based on the output-input ratio perceived by the employees.

Equity is represented schematically as follows:

Person's outcomes / Person's inputs = Other's outcomes / Other's inputs

Inequity is represented as follows:

Person's outcomes / Person's inputs < Other's outcomes / Other's inputs (or)

Person's outcomes / Person's inputs > Other's outcomes / Other's inputs.

The equity theory uses the referent variable chosen by the employees. A referent variable is an object or individual with whom an employee compares himself/herself. Various referent comparisons are self-inside, self-outside, other-inside and other-outside.

*Self-inside:* An employee holding a position in an organization compares his/her experiences with other employees holding a similar position in the same organization. For example, a salesperson in a company compares himself/herself with another salesperson of the same company.

*Self-outside:* An employee compares his/her experiences with employees holding a similar position in a different organization. For example, a HR manager of an organization compares his/her job position with the HR manager of another organization.

*Other-inside:* An employee compares himself/herself with other employees working in different job positions in the same organization. For example, an accounts assistant compares his/her position with the commercial head of the organization.

*Other-outside:* An employee compares his/her experiences with that of an individual or group of individuals working for another organization in different positions. For example, a sales assistant of a company compares himself/herself with the HR manager of another company.

Objects of reference or the referents could be friends, peers, or neighbors in the same organization as the employee or colleagues in an organization where the employee worked previously. The employee's choice of referent depends on variables like gender of the employee, length of tenure in the organization, level at which the employee has been working in the organization, and his/her level of education or professional qualifications.

According to the equity theory, employees who perceive inequity in their position when compared with their referents are likely to make certain choices. These can be change in inputs, change in outcomes, distorted perceptions of self, distorted perceptions of others, choosing a different referent, and/or leaving the field.

The **equity theory** states that employees try to relate their rewards with rewards of others apart from relating them to the efforts they have put in. Employees try to overcome perceived inequity by the following methods:

- When payments are on an hourly basis, employees who perceive that their rewards exceed their inputs, experience inequity and try to restore equity by producing more than equitably paid employees.
- If payment is on a piece-rate basis, over-rewarded employees tend to increase output in either qualitative or quantitative terms. However, increasing quantity would further increase inequity and the employee would try to restore equity by producing fewer units of high quality.
- In an hourly basis payment system, under-rewarded employees try to

restore equity by reducing their efforts either in quantitative or qualitative terms.

- When payment is based on the number of units produced, under-rewarded employees try to bring about equity by producing more units but of a lower quality.

### **Attribution Theory**

The attribution theory identifies the acknowledgements made by people as the basis for their motivation. Different attribution theories have some common traits. They try to provide a logical explanation to all that is happening, attribute actions of individuals to internal or external causes, and propose that individuals follow a fairly logical approach in making attributions. The attribution theory tries to explain the relationship between personal perception and interpersonal behavior apart from explaining individual motivation.

The attribution theory tries to answer the 'why' aspect of motivation and behavior. As stated by a famous social psychologist, Harold H. Kelley, the attribution theory deals with cognitive processes, which help to interpret individuals' behavior as caused by aspects of the relevant environment.

Many cognitive theorists contributed to the development of attribution theory, but the credit for initiating it goes to Fritz Heider. According to him, internal forces such as ability, effort, and fatigue along with external forces like rules, weather, etc. determine the behavior of individuals. He stressed that the behavior of people when they perceive the internal attributes of an individual differs from their behavior when they perceive the external attributes. This differential attribution has an impact on work motivation.

Many researchers have studied employee behavior using the 'locus of control' model of attribution theory. Locus of control refers to the chief source of factors that creates a result or gives rise to an outcome in the employee's perception. Employees who believe in the internal locus of control feel that by means of ability, skills, and efforts they have the power to change or influence outcome. Contrary to this, employees who believe in external locus of control feel that they are in no position to control outcomes. Some studies have found that managers with internal locus of control are better performers, considerate toward their subordinates, are not over-stressed and follow a strategic approach in comparison with managers with an external locus of control. Some other studies have found that managers with an external locus of control take more initiative and are more considerate than managers with an internal locus of control. Over all, the attribution theory helps in explaining goal-setting, leadership, and employee performance along with giving suggestions for managerial behavior and performance.

### **Other Emerging Theories**

Theories such as control theory and agency theory have also become popular along with theories based on cognitive psychology. Two versions of control theory exist. One version states that control is a cognitive phenomenon and people with personal control can handle unpleasant events with poise and that perceived control enhances job satisfaction while reducing absenteeism. The other version focuses on the control function which is an integral part of the management process. Recent research has emphasized that strategic control of human resources is important while traditional theorists consider control of inputs and outputs of organizations as important.

The agency theory, developed on the basis of some concepts in financial economics, is applicable to various areas of organizational behavior. It helps in understanding how principals (owners, board of directors, or top management) can reduce conflicts between their interests and those of agents (subordinates, middle management, or shop floor employees) by giving rewards or incentives to agents for achieving the desired results. Research indicates that the agency theory is applicable to various areas of OB like compensation contracts, foreign subsidiary compensation strategies, and

variable pay compensation strategies.

### Summary

- Motivation is defined as a process which triggers a specific behavior or drive so as to achieve a goal or incentive that was initiated by a physiological or psychological deficiency or need. The elements of motivation such as needs, drives, and incentives are interacting and interdependent.
- The content theories of motivation like Maslow's hierarchy of needs, Herzberg's two-factor theory, and Alderfer's ERG theory concentrates on *what* factors motivate people at work.
- The process theories of motivation like the Vroom's expectancy theory and Porter-Lawler model suggests *how* employees can be motivated to work.
- Contemporary theories of work motivation are equity and attribution theories. These theories of motivation try to explain *why* people are motivated to work and have implications for managerial behavior and performance.
- Other emerging theories for motivation at work are control theory and the agency theory.

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