



Impact of Employee Motivation on Organizational Performance

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Abstract

Employee motivation is considered to be one of the most crucial internal factors of the success of an organization. The more motivated the employee is, the more he/she will work, the more likely he/she will persist in the face of obstacles and the more likely he/she will be to act in a way that will lead to achievement of the goals of the organization, which will affect productivity, quality, innovation, and financial outcomes. The present paper is based on secondary data gathered from classical theories, peer-reviewed journal publications, meta-analytic reviews and standard textbooks in management and organizational behaviour on the effect of employee motivation on organizational performance. The concepts of motivation and organizational performance are explained and then major content, process and self-determination perspectives summarized and discussed, and then empirical evidence on the motivation–performance relationship is synthesized. The review suggests that motivation has an impact on performance via effort, job satisfaction, engagement, commitment and discretionary behaviour and that this impact is greater when there is a balance between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, and when jobs are well designed and goals are clear and rewards are perceived as fair. The paper ends up recommending that organizations view motivation as a strategic resource and also consider it when designing jobs, establishing goals, designing rewards, and implementing leadership practice.

Keywords: Employee motivation, Organizational performance, Job satisfaction, Employee engagement, Productivity, Human resource management

Introduction

The business world is characterized by high competition, technological innovation, and employee demands. With such conditions, both physical and financial resources can be obtained by nearly any company, but the ability of human resources is not so easily bought and sold. That is why employee motivation has been an issue of management thinkers since the early 20th century. Whereas the first generation of research on work motivation was largely based on need, Latham and Pinder (1987) note that the second generation expanded the explanations to involve cognition, emotion, personality and context. Kanfer, Frese and Johnson also review a century of research in this area and demonstrate that today, motivation is recognized as a dynamic construct that varies across tasks, teams and career stages (Kanfer et al., 2000). The motivation is crucial in practice because of the following simple fact: performance is not always a function of ability. An able worker with no interest in the job can produce much less than a moderately able worker who is very interested in the job. Robbins and Judge's definition of motivation is the processes that explain the intensity, direction and persistence of an individual's effort toward achieving a goal (Robbins and Judge, 2002). If thousands of workers in an organization are operating at a high level



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of intensity, appropriate direction and sustained persistence, the output, service quality, customer satisfaction, and profitability will show up. On the other hand, low motivation manifests itself as absenteeism, turnover, the quality and the resistance to change. More than ever before, the issue of motivating employees is relevant in developing economies like India, where diverse large groups of people are employed in the service, manufacturing and public sectors. There are a number of differences with regard to education, income, goals, and job security that make it impossible to find a single motivation to suit everyone. Academic interest in the study of the relationship between motivation and organizational performance thus has managerial value.

Concept of Employee Motivation and Organizational Performance

Motivation comes from the Latin word “movere” which means to move. In an organizational context it is the internal and external factors that start, guide and maintain work-related behaviour. Pinder defines work motivation as a series of energizing forces that emerge from within and beyond the person and that trigger work action and shape its nature, direction, strength and duration (Pinder 11). This is helpful because it emphasizes that motivation is not just a personal attribute, but is affected by the work, the manager, the reward structure and the culture of the organization.

On the other hand, organizational performance is a much broader term. It is a measure of how effectively an organisation has accomplished its goals in terms of financial results, including profit and return on investment, market results, such as sales and market share, and non-financial results, such as quality and innovation, customer satisfaction and employee well-being. The concept of performance thinking is not only focused on the financial aspects of performance, but also on the role of human resources as one of the most important determinants of long-term performance. Harter, Schmidt and Hayes found that there is a connection between employee satisfaction and engagement and customer satisfaction, productivity, profit, turnover, and the outcomes of safety at the business-unit level (Harter et al., 268). This is proof that there are quantifiable organizational outcomes caused by motivated people.

Objectives of the Study

1. To explain the concept of employee motivation and its relationship with organizational performance.
2. To review the major theories of motivation that are relevant to workplace behaviour.
3. To analyse secondary evidence on the effect of employee motivation on productivity, job satisfaction, employee engagement, and organizational outcomes.
4. To suggest managerial measures through which employee motivation can be strengthened to improve organizational performance.

Research Methodology and Scope

The study is descriptive, analytical in nature and based on secondary data alone. This material was drawn from the classical works on management, original theoretical works, meta-analytic and review articles in the reputed journals and normal university level textbooks. No primary data was collected (e.g. questionnaires, interviews). The sources were chosen for their content, relatedness to the motivation–performance link, and general acceptance within the academic



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community. The material collected was grouped and presented under the following headings: theoretical perspectives, empirical findings and managerial implications and summarized in tables for easy comparison between the headings. The study is limited to the study of the organizational level of employee motivation and not in measuring the level of motivation in any specific firm. A limitation is the use of secondary sources; that means that the conclusions drawn will be based on the conditions of the original studies and may require testing within a particular organizational setting. The motivation theories that will be used in the study will be covered.

Theoretical Foundations of Employee Motivation

Content theories try to pinpoint the needs and factors that are motivating. The most widely recognised is Maslow's hierarchy of needs, which posits that human needs are ordered in terms of prepotency, starting with physiological and then progressing to safety, belongingness, esteem and self-actualization (Maslow, 375). This is the idea that as a need is satisfied, it no longer drives behaviour and focus moves on to the next need. Despite some more recent empirical research that has challenged the rigid ordering of the hierarchy, this theory remains central to managerial thinking as it highlights the vast range of types of needs that employees bring to work. Alderfer streamlined the framework to two needs: existence and relatedness and growth and left several needs simultaneously at work (Alderfer, 145). Herzberg's two factor theory considers hygiene factors (pay, supervision, policies and working conditions) as well as motivators (achievement, recognition, responsibility and the work itself). Herzberg and his colleagues explained that hygiene factors can cause a lack of satisfaction and that motivators are what really cause satisfaction and effort (Herzberg et al., 113).

McClelland emphasized learned needs, and he's identified three additional key factors that shape behaviour in organizations: the need for achievement, affiliation and power; people with a high need for achievement like moderately difficult tasks and feedback on performance (McClelland, 36). However, McGregor's Theory X and Theory Y compared two sets of assumptions about people and proposed that those managers who make the assumption that people will be self-directed and self-responsible will set the conditions in which people will be committed (McGregor, 47). Process theories do not address what motivates people but how. Vroom's expectancy theory explains that motivation to perform is a product of expectancy, which is the certainty of a person's ability to perform if they apply their efforts; instrumentality, which is the certainty of the reward for performing; and valence, which is the value of the reward to the person (Vroom, 17). Porter and Lawler expanded the model by demonstrating that performance results in rewards, that rewards are judged as satisfying or not, and that satisfaction with or dissatisfaction with rewards, consequently, affects future effort (Porter and Lawler, 165). This suggests that when staff think that they can perform, their performance will be acknowledged and that the reward is worthwhile, they will be motivated to exert effort. Adams' equity theory suggests that when employees perceive inequity then they will decrease effort, try to increase their rewards, or leave the organization (Adams, 424).

According to the goal-setting theory of Locke and Latham, people work harder to achieve specific and challenging goals than easy and vague goals, and they work harder when they receive



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feedback and are committed to the goals (Locke and Latham, 27). Bandura's research on self-efficacy also suggests that individuals will be more motivated if they have a strong sense of their own ability to perform the needed actions (Bandura, 3). Combined, process theories demonstrate that perceptions of fairness, goal clarity and self-efficiency are critical factors that lead to decision to do. The job characteristics model of Hackman and Oldham are directly related to job design and motivation. The model suggests that when combined, skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy and feedback generate what is called psychologically meaningful work, which subsequently results in a sense of responsibility and knowledge of results, which in turn leads to high internal work motivation and satisfaction (Hackman and Oldham, 256). Kahn's ideas on personal engagement also suggest that workers are more likely to be their whole selves at work when they feel meaningfulness, safety and availability (Kahn, 700). The following insights reveal that motivation can be built into work, and that it is not just about offering rewards. The main theories and their implications to organizational performance are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1: Major Theories of Employee Motivation and Their Implications for Organizational Performance

Theory (Theorist)	Core Proposition	Implication for Organizational Performance
Hierarchy of Needs (Maslow)	Needs are arranged from physiological to self-actualization; unsatisfied needs motivate	Offer a mix of security, social, esteem and growth opportunities to sustain effort
ERG Theory (Alderfer)	Existence, relatedness and growth needs may operate together	Provide alternative routes to satisfaction when growth opportunities are limited
Two-Factor Theory (Herzberg)	Hygiene factors prevent dissatisfaction; motivators create satisfaction	Maintain fair pay and conditions, and enrich jobs with recognition and responsibility
Acquired Needs (McClelland)	Achievement, affiliation and power needs shape behaviour	Match tasks, feedback and roles with the dominant need of the employee
Expectancy Theory (Vroom)	Effort depends on expectancy, instrumentality and valence	Link performance clearly with valued rewards and build employee confidence
Equity Theory (Adams)	Employees compare their input–outcome ratio with others	Ensure transparent and fair pay, promotion and appraisal systems



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Goal-Setting (Locke and Latham)	Specific, difficult goals with feedback improve performance	Use clear targets, regular feedback and participation in goal setting
Self-Determination (Deci and Ryan)	Autonomy, competence and relatedness sustain intrinsic motivation	Support autonomy and skill development; avoid excessive control
Job Characteristics (Hackman and Oldham)	Core job dimensions create meaningfulness and responsibility	Redesign jobs through enrichment, variety and feedback

Source: Compiled by the author from Maslow, Alderfer, Herzberg et al., McClelland, Vroom, Adams, Locke and Latham, Deci and Ryan, and Hackman and Oldham (see References).

Review of Literature on the Motivation–Performance Relationship

The link between satisfaction and performance has been the most controversial topic of organizational research. After conducting a qualitative and quantitative literature review, Judge et al. (376) reported about a corrected mean correlation of approximately 0.30 between job satisfaction and job performance, which better warrants a moderate and meaningful association. They also commented that the relationship is more pronounced in complex jobs and that satisfaction could exhibit a stronger relationship with performance via factors such as commitment and positive affect (Judge et al., 397). The discovery contradicts the previous notion that satisfaction and performance don't go hand-in-hand, and counters the idea that motivated, satisfied employees represent a good organizational resource. Kanfer summarised motivation theory in industrial/organizational psychology and noted that effort allocation is a function of personal factors (abilities, self-regulatory skills) and situational factors (task characteristics, feedback) (Kanfer, 100). More recently, Kanfer, Frese and Johnson argued that modern workplaces involve more autonomy and teamwork, thus necessitating motivation theories that explain self-regulation, goal pursuit and adaptation, rather than simply rewards (p. 345). Engagement is sometimes referred to as the “apparent form of motivation in action”. Harter et al. (274) discovered that those business units that had higher satisfaction and engagement scores had improved customer loyalty, profitability, productivity and safety results, and lower turnover rates. Engaged employees are those whose work is meaningful, when it is not perceived as being unsafe or when it fails to provide them with the resources they need to perform their job (Kahn, 694).

What's being suggested here is that organizational effectiveness is not just a function of the number of people working for an organization, but of the extent to which they are fully engaged. Goal setting is one of the most consistent areas of management research literature. Numerous laboratory and field studies were reviewed by Locke and Latham and they identified that setting specific and difficult goals was a factor that would result in higher performance than easy goals or instruction to do one's best as long as the employee has the ability to attain the goal and is willing to accept it (Locke and Latham, 6). To be most effective, goal setting is best accomplished with feedback, with employee involvement, and with organizational assistance to goal achievement (Latham and Pinder, 495). Steers et al (380) suggest that reward theory research



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should take into account the evolving nature of work, the growing diversity and knowledge-intensive tasks, where direct pay-for-performance relationships do not necessarily hold true. Adams' equity theory insinuates that when employees think the reward is high but not high enough when compared to others, it can demotivate them even if the reward is high in magnitude. Rewards such as recognition, praise and meaningful feedback are also effective and inexpensive motivators, in addition to money, Luthans also states (Luthans, 160). A summary of selected secondary evidence of motivation–performance relationship is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Summary of Selected Secondary Evidence on the Motivation–Performance Relationship

Source	Type of Evidence	Main Finding Relevant to Performance
Judge et al.	Meta-analysis of job satisfaction–performance studies	Moderate positive relationship (corrected mean correlation about 0.30); stronger in complex jobs
Harter et al.	Meta-analysis at business-unit level	Employee satisfaction and engagement are related to customer satisfaction, productivity, profit, turnover and safety
Locke and Latham	Review of goal-setting research	Specific and challenging goals with feedback produce higher performance than vague or easy goals
Gagné and Deci	Theoretical review applying self-determination theory	Autonomous motivation is linked with better performance, commitment and well-being
Hackman and Oldham	Job characteristics model and empirical test	Well-designed jobs raise internal work motivation and satisfaction and reduce absenteeism and turnover
Kanfer et al.	Review of a century of work-motivation research	Motivation is dynamic and depends on self-regulation, goals and context, not on rewards alone

Source: Compiled by the author from Judge et al., Harter et al., Locke and Latham, Gagné and Deci, Hackman and Oldham, and Kanfer et al. (see References).

Motivation cannot be created in a vacuum and is not independent of the management setting. The type of supervision mirrors the assumptions that managers make about people, and these assumptions tend to be self-fulfilling: supervisors who are managing closely are likely to have employees who are passive, and vice versa with supervisors who are trusted and likelier to have active employees (McGregor, 33). Porter and Lawler also demonstrated that satisfaction is not just a result of performance, but it is also affected by the reward system; that is, satisfaction is a function of performance that is fairly rewarded (Porter and Lawler, 165). It underscores an



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important perspective for managers that the series of effort, performance, reward and satisfaction is a system and needs to be managed as such. Rewards and goals are also shaped by organizational culture, communication and quality supervisory relationships. If communication is open and feedback is regular, employees will have a sense of understanding the contribution they are making to the organization's goals, which will lead to a greater sense of significance outlined by Hackman and Oldham 256. In the absence of good communication, even good incentives can be misinterpreted, and the relationship between effort and reward can be lessened. Positive reinforcement, when used consistently, leads to improvements in performance, and its impact is greater when it is made clear to employees what behaviours they are being rewarded for (Luthans, 160).

Analysis and Discussion

Based on the secondary material obtained, a synthesis was done that indicates that the relationship between employee motivation and organizational performance is mediated by five interconnected channels. Effort and persistence is the first one. With positive staff attitudes, they put more energy into their work and will persevere through difficult situations, resulting in higher productivity and fewer mistakes. The second is quality of decision and initiative, people who feel they belong will be more likely to make suggestions for improvements, solve problems and take responsibility for the results. The third is commitment and retention. Happy and motivated staff are less likely to leave and turnover decreases the recruitment and training expenses, and it helps maintain organization knowledge. The fourth is discretionary or citizenship behaviour, for example, assisting colleagues and supporting the organisation outside of the job role. The fifth is customer orientation – in service organisations employee attitude is easily communicated to customers and is the reason for the correlation between employee engagement and customer satisfaction that was reported by (Harter et al. 274). These channels are not mutually exclusive. The clearer the goal, the stronger the expectancy, the stronger the fair rewards, the stronger the equity perceptions and the stronger the autonomy, the stronger the intrinsic motivation. Pritchard and Ashwood's definition of motivation as the distribution of personal resources towards actions and outcomes is relevant to this as it demonstrates how organisations can impact performance by manipulating the relationship between effort to performance to valued outcomes. As channels are interrelated, the programs and initiatives that are running in isolation with no feedback or autonomy are unlikely to yield sustained improvement over time. The nature of the relationship between motivation and performance is also suggested as different at different levels of the organization in the review. Motivation affects task effort, accuracy and learning at the individual level.

It influences team cooperation, communication and mutual goal commitment at the team level. The whole effect of individual and team behaviour can be seen in factors like productivity per person, quality of work product, customer retention and financial return at the organizational level. The researchers in this study, Harter et al., analyzed their data at the business-unit level because organizational outcomes are the result of the sum of employee attitudes and behaviours (Harter et al., 268). This approach is multilevel, which should remind managers that motivation programmes should not be limited to individuals, but should also develop team spirit and a



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positive climate between departments. Moreover, it is helpful to differentiate between quantity and quality and creative output. Rewards for quantity could speed up production but might not promote adequate attention to work, while autonomy and meaningful work will promote innovation and problem solving. Gagné and Deci emphasize that autonomous motivation is particularly useful when the activities call for judgement, flexibility and creativity (350).

In knowledge-intensive industries, designing motivation systems should correspond with the type of knowledge being applied. Intrinsic/extrinsic motivation is an important topic in designing rewards. Extrinsic motivators like pay, bonuses, promotion, and security for employment are meant to meet basic needs and provide a tangible sign of organizational appreciation. Higher order intrinsic motivators include interesting work, learning, autonomy and a sense of achievement and are more enduring. Rewards that are seen as controlling can actually decrease intrinsic motivation, while competence and recognition-based rewards can keep it up (Ryan and Deci, 71). Herzberg and co had also stated that relying on hygiene factors alone is not enough to create enthusiastic feelings (Herzberg et al., 113). The bottom line is that businesses should have a mix of the two, not just one or the other. Table 3 shows the characteristics and typical organizational outcomes of both categories.

Table 3: Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivators and Their Typical Organizational Outcomes

Aspect	Intrinsic Motivators	Extrinsic Motivators
Examples	Challenging work, autonomy, recognition of competence, learning, meaningful tasks	Pay, bonus, promotion, benefits, job security, working conditions
Need satisfied	Higher-order needs (esteem, growth, self-actualization)	Lower-order and security needs; status
Effect on effort	Sustained and self-directed effort; more persistence in complex tasks	Strong short-term effort when rewards are valued and linked with performance
Risk if misused	Overload or burnout if resources and support are lacking	Reduced autonomy, perceived control and inequity if rewards are unfair
Typical outcomes	Engagement, creativity, commitment, well-being	Attendance, compliance, goal attainment, retention in the short run
Theoretical base	Self-determination, job characteristics, Herzberg's motivators	Expectancy, equity, reinforcement, Herzberg's hygiene factors

Source: Compiled by the author from Ryan and Deci, Gagné and Deci, Herzberg et al., Vroom, Adams, and Hackman and Oldham (see References).



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The review has several implications for management. Jobs should be designed to offer variety, autonomy, meaning and feedback, and these elements are likely to generate intrinsic motivation at a relatively low cost (Hackman and Oldham, 256). Second, organisations need to set clear, specific and attainable goals and make sure that employees are involved in setting them and give frequent feedback (Locke and Latham, 27). Thirdly, reward systems should be clear, fairly perceived and include a mix of rewards such as recognition and career development and monetary awards. Fourth, managers should embrace the principles of a Theory Y approach and trust employees and delegate responsibility to them (McGregor, 48). Fifthly, investment in training builds self-efficacy which in turn builds motivation (Bandura, 3). Finally, it's essential to keep an eye on motivation through regular engagement surveys and exit interviews to ensure that any early warning signs of disengagement are addressed. The review also identifies areas for improvement. Much of the classical theories reflect Western contexts and may need to be adapted in culturally different contexts. Correlations between meta analysis do not imply causation: High performance can also lead to high satisfaction and motivation via reward and success. The present study is of secondary data type and may be tested through survey of employees of particular sectors like Banking, Education, Health Care or any other manufacturing sector for future research.

Motivation needs to be linked to the performance management system of the organization to achieve results in terms of organization. The system involves goal setting, ongoing feedback, appraisal, recognition, training and career planning. In today's work world, employees need to manage their own effort and learning, so appraisal should not be restricted to an annual assessment but be used throughout the year to assist in development (Kanfer et al., 345). If appraisal is seen as accurate and fair, it can increase equity perceptions and instrumentality, but if appraisal is seen as biased, it can rapidly erode trust and effort (Adams, 424). Training and development should be given special consideration. Competence is one of the three fundamental psychological needs described in SDT (Ryan and Deci, 70) and opportunities to learn new skills increase competence, as do increase in self-efficacy and expectancy (Bandura, 3). Besides, career advancement and internal promotion make clear that rewards are contingent upon contribution. Businesses that integrate these practices form a self-sustaining loop: high-performing and engaged employees produce greater results, feel valued and developed, and thus are more motivated to contribute. It is one of the main processes by which human resource becomes a competitive advantage in the firm.

Finally, the organisation needs to realise that motivational needs evolve the time. An inexperienced employee starting their career may prioritize learning, skill development, and income growth, whereas a more experienced employee might be more concerned with autonomy, recognition, and work-life balance. Kanfer et al. warn that this motivation is different for different stages of a person's career and in different contexts and managers should not take a one-size-fits-all approach (Kanfer et al., 340). Meeting these evolving needs requires a continued dialogue between managers and employees and some flexibility in rewards. This responsiveness will



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safeguard the investment that has been made in recruitment and training as well as ensure that long-term organizational performance goals are aligned with employee motivation.

Conclusion

The paper reviewed the theoretical and empirical secondary sources to gain insight into the effect of employee motivation on organizational performance. The review demonstrates that motivation is a multi-faceted phenomenon that is influenced by the individual's needs, sense of fairness and expectancy, goals, design of work and the climate facilitated by management. Meta-analysis suggests that there is a positive and meaningful link between satisfaction and organizational outcomes including productivity, customer satisfaction, profitability and retention, as well as engagement. The influence of motivation is manifested in the individual's efforts, initiative, commitment, citizenship behavior, and attitude toward customers. Organizations are not able to motivate their employees with pay alone, it is concluded. Fair rewards and meaningful work, autonomy, clear goals, feedback and recognition and opportunities for growth are more likely to produce sustained performance. Therefore managers should consider motivation to be a strategic asset, incorporate it into human resource policy and practice, and audit it on a regular basis. Further research with primary data from various industries would substantiate and/or correct the results of secondary data used in this paper.

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