THEORIES OF MOTIVATION

Chapter 2

THEORIES OF MOTIVATION

An attempt is made in this chapter to bring a theoretical base for motivation.

There are many competing theories, which attempt to explain the nature of motivation. These theories are all, at least, partially true, and all help to explain the behavior of certain people at certain times. However, the search for a generalised theory of motivation at work appears a vain quest. Motivation varies over time and depending up on the circumstances.

It is because of the complexity of motivation and the fact that there is no single answer to what motivates people to work well, that these different theories are important for the managers to guide them. They show that there are many motives, which influence people's behavior and performance. The different
theories provide a framework within which direct attention is incorporated to the problem of how best to motivate staff to work willingly and effectively. It is important to emphasize that these various theories are not conclusive. These different cognitive theories of motivation are usually divided into two contrasting approaches\(^1\): content theories and process theories.

Content theories attempt to explain those specific things, which actually motivate the individual at work. These theories are concerned with identifying people’s needs and their relative strength, and the goals they pursue in order to satisfy these needs. Content theories place emphasis on what motivates.

Process theories attempt to identify the relationship among the dynamic variables, which make up motivation. These theories are more concerned with how behavior is initiated, directed and sustained. Process theories place emphasis on the actual process of motivation.

### 2.1 Maslow’s Need Hierarchy Theory

The most well known and pioneering theory of motivation is that of Abraham Maslow’s hierarchy of needs. According to Maslow’s hierarchy of human needs, people are motivated by five basic needs. These needs are arranged in the order in which a person seeks to gratify them. These needs are:

1. Physiological needs - (food, clothing, shelter, etc.,)
2. The need for safety and security - (freedom from danger, job security, health-care etc.,)

3. The need to belong - (Acceptance by the group, friendships, love etc.,)

4. The need for esteem - (Recognition by others, feeling of achievement etc.,)

5. The need for self-actualization - (fulfillment of capacities)

The needs are arranged in order of importance under the assumption that a lower level need is satisfied before the next higher level need becomes a motivating factor. People try to satisfy their physiological needs first. When their basic needs are ensured, they seek security, belongingness, esteem and finally self-actualization. When one need is satisfied, next higher level need emerges to take its place. People are always striving to satisfy the new needs that emerge.

Since the need hierarchy theory of Abraham Maslow is being the core of study, this theory is dealt in detail in chapter III separately.

2.2 Alderfer’s ERG Theory

2.3 Clayton Alderfer reorganized Maslow’s Need hierarchy into three levels of core needs: (1) Existence needs (2) Relatedness needs and (3) Growth needs - hence the label ERG Theory.²
Existence needs includes both physiological and safety needs; it corresponds to the lower-order needs of Maslow’s theory. Relatedness comprises love and belongingness needs. Growth incorporates both esteem and self-actualization needs. Relatedness and growth needs together comprise the higher order needs as set by Maslow.

ERG Theory argues like that of Maslow that satisfied lower order needs lead to the desire for satisfaction of higher order needs. But Alderfer states that multiple needs can be operating as motivators at the same time. An employee frustrated in efforts to satisfy growth needs, for example, might be motivated to satisfy the lower level relatedness needs.

2.3 Herzenberg’s Two-Factor Theory

On the basis of extensive interviews with some 200 engineers and accountants employed in 11 industries in an around Pittsburgh area, U.S.A., Frederick Herzenberg and his associates developed a Two factor model of motivation. In the interviews they were asked about what kind of things on their job made them unhappy or dissatisfied and what things made them happy or satisfied. From the analysis they found that reported good feelings were associated with job content factors. Reported bad feelings, on the other hand, were
associated with the peripheral aspects of the job—the job context factors. The intrinsic job content factors are the job satisfiers or motivators and the extrinsic job context factors are the dissatisfiers or hygiene factors. Taken together, they became known as Herzberg's dual factor theory.

2.3. (i) **Hygiene Factors**

Company policies and administration, supervision, working conditions, security, status, salary, interpersonal relations are considered as maintenance factors. They are not an intrinsic part of a job, but they are related to the conditions under which a job is performed. Maintaining a hygienic work environment will not improve motivation. He found that the presence of hygiene factors will prevent dissatisfaction but do not increase satisfaction or motivation and the absence of which, increase dissatisfaction with the job. Hence he called these factors as dissatisfiers/maintenance factors.

2.3. (ii) **Motivators**

Motivators are associated directly to the content of job itself. These factors include achievement, recognition, advancement, work itself, responsibility,
growth etc. The presence of motivators leads to satisfaction whereas the absence of which will prevent both satisfaction and motivation\(^5\).

According to Herzberg's theory, only challenging jobs that have the opportunities for achievement, recognition, responsibility, advancement and growth will motivate personnel.

2.3.(iii) **Relation to Maslow Theory**

Herzberg's theory is closely related to Maslow's need hierarchy. On a comparison, one can see that the maintenance or hygiene factors are roughly equivalent to Maslow's lower level needs and the motivators are roughly equivalent to Maslow's higher level needs.

2.4 **Achievement Motivation**

David McClelland and his associates (Notably John Atkinson), focused on needs similar to the higher order (social and esteem) needs identified by Maslow. McClelland's needs theory, also called Achievement motivation theory\(^6\) is concerned with how individual needs and environmental factors combine to form three basic human motives.
2.4.(i) *Need for Achievement (n Ach)*:

People who want to take responsibility for finding solutions to problems, who seek challenge, who is willing to work hard and who has the mental vigor to reach the ultimate goal are considered to have a high need for achievement. Achievement motivated people tend to get more pay raises and are promoted faster because they are constantly trying to think of better ways of doing things. They have a desire to do something better or more efficiently than it has been done before. This drive is the achievement need.

2.4.(ii) *Need For Power (n Pow)*:

Need for power is the desire to have impact to be influential, and to control others. A high need for power means that an individual seeks to influence or control others. Individuals with this need are concerned with acquiring, exercising and retaining power or influence over others. They prefer to be placed into competitive and status oriented situations. They generally tend to seek positions of leadership. Top level managers, politicians etc., have a high need for power.
2.4(iii) Need For Affiliation (n Aff):

Need for affiliation is related to the desire for affection and establishing friendly relationships. People who have a high need for affiliation view the organization as a chance to form new and satisfying relationships. They are motivated by the jobs that provide frequent interaction with colleagues. They derive pleasure from being loved by the group.

Each of the McClelland’s three motives evokes a different type of feeling of satisfaction. Achievement motive tends to evoke a sense of accomplishment, power motive tends to evoke a sense of authority and affiliation motive tends to evoke love and affection. The most effective mixture of these three motives depends on the situation. Different studies\(^7\) indicate that most effective managers have a high need for power, a moderate need for achievement and a low need for affiliation. Tools like Thematic Apperception Test (TAT) are used to measure and determine the strength of these needs.

For the purpose of identifying the similarities in these theories, an attempt has been made for comparing these four theories.
The underlying concept of motivation is some driving force within individuals by which they attempt to achieve some goals in order to satisfy some need or other. On a comparison of these Need Theories (Figure 2.1) it is seen that the Existence Needs of Alderfer is roughly equal to Maslow's Physiological and Safety Needs; The Relatedness Need of Alderfer and the Affiliation Need of McClelland is more or less equivalent to the Social Needs of Maslow. The Hygiene factors of Herzberg are nothing but the Physiological, Safety and love needs.
needs of Maslow. The Esteem and Self-actualization Needs of Maslow comprises
the Growth Needs set by Alderfer, the Need for Achievement, the Need for Power
set by McClelland and the Motivators of Herzberg.

2.5 Theory X and Theory Y

Douglas McGregor proposed two distinct views of human beings: one
basically negative, labeled Theory X and the other basically positive, labeled
Theory Y. These labels describe contrasting set of assumptions about human
nature.

Theory X assumes that most people prefer to be directed, are not
interested in assuming responsibility and want safety above all. It is the traditional
view of management that suggests that managers are required to coerce, control or
threaten employees in order to motivate them.

2.5.(i) Assumptions about Human Nature under Theory X:

1. Employees inherently dislike work, and whenever possible will attempt to
   avoid it.

2. Employees are not ambitious, and they avoid responsibility.
3. Employees must be coerced, controlled, directed and threatened with punishment to achieve organizational objectives.

4. Employees lack creative ability in solving organizational problems.

5. Employees seek security and economic rewards.

Theory X is a conventional approach of management, based on traditional assumptions about human behavior. It is negative, traditional and autocratic style. Drawing heavily on Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, Theory X assumes that lower order needs dominate individuals. But in fact, Management by direction and control may not be effective for motivating people whose physiological and safety needs are reasonably satisfied and whose social, esteem and self actualization needs are becoming predominant.

For having a more realistic and accurate understanding of human nature and motivation, Mcgregor developed an alternative theory of human behavior called Theory Y. Theory Y is positive, participating and democratic. This theory assumes that, people are not, by nature, lazy and unreliable. It postulates that people can be basically self directed and creative at work, if properly motivated.

2.5.(ii) Assumptions about Human Nature under Theory Y:

1. Employees can view work as natural as play or rest.
2. People are not by nature passive or resistant to organizational needs. They can exercise self-direction and self control, if they are properly motivated.

3. Employees have creative capacity in solving organizational problems.

4. An average employee learns, under proper conditions, not only to accept but also to seek responsibility.

5. Self control is often indispensable in achieving organizational goals.

Thus Theory Y assumptions present a high degree of faith in the capacity and potentiality of people. Theory Y assumes that higher order needs dominate individuals. Unfortunately there is no conclusive evidence to confirm that either set of assumptions are valid. Both Theory X and Theory Y assumptions may be appropriate in a particular situation.

2.6 Immaturity - Maturity Theory

Cris Argyris\(^9\) has postulated a descriptive and multidimensional developmental process along which individuals in an organization naturally grow towards maturity. He has examined various industrial organizations to determine the effect of management practices on individual behavior and their personal growth in work environment. Argyris noticed that there are seven basic changes
that take place in the personality of individuals moving from immaturity to maturity over the years. They are as follows:

### 2.6.(i) Immaturity - Maturity Continuum

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Passive</th>
<th>Active</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dependence</td>
<td>Independence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behave in a few ways</td>
<td>Capable of behaving in many ways</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shallow abilities and interests</td>
<td>Developing stronger and deeper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shallow abilities and interests</td>
<td>Developing stronger and deeper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short time perspective</td>
<td>Long time perspective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subordinate Position</td>
<td>Equal or super ordinate position</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of self-awareness</td>
<td>Self-control and self-awareness</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

People in work organizations will have a tendency to grow from an infant to a matured state. But many organizations are structured and organized in such a way that the management practices they follow will keep away the employees from maturing. Employees are given minimal control over their environment. They are expected to be passive, dependent and subordinate. If the
organization is too formal that it has definite plans, policies, procedures and methods, an employee will need to be submissive and passive, which suggest a Theory X type of organization.

In between a mature personality and a highly structured organization, an employee has options like escape, fight or adapt.10

When the structure of the organization is too formal, where employee has no control over their environment, he may escape by quitting the job, being absent from work or getting promotion to higher levels. One can fight the system by exerting pressure on the organization by means of informal groups or through labor unions. Another way is to adapt to situations by developing an attitude of apathy or indifference. This is the most unhealthy option that an employee chooses - according to Argyris. He argues that management should provide a good work climate in which every one has a chance to grow and mature as individuals.11

Since employees can move from the state of immature behavior to mature behavior, he supports Theory Y, propounded by Mcgregor, and both (Mcgregor and Argyris) found that broadening individual’s responsibility is beneficial to both workers and the organization.

A change in the organization is essential so that individuals grow and mature in it. This in turn will motivate employees, which will provide maximum
potential from them, in accomplishing organizational objectives. Thus Argyris proposes that the existing bureaucratic - pyramidal organization structure (the organizational counterpart to Theory X assumptions about people) should give way to humanistic - democratic value system (the organizational counterpart to Theory Y assumptions about people\textsuperscript{12}).

2.7 Vroom's Expectancy Theory

One of the most widely accepted explanations of motivation is Victor Vroom's\textsuperscript{13} expectancy theory. Vroom proposed his expectancy theory in 1960's as an alternative to the content models.

Vroom explains that motivation is a product of three factors, viz, Valence (how much one wants a reward), Expectancy (one's estimate of the probability that effort will result in successful performance) and Instrumentality (one's estimate that performance will result in receiving the reward).

This motivational relationship is expressed in the form of a formula.

Motivation = V \times E \times I \ (Valence \times \ Expectancy \times \ Instrumentality)

Valence is the strength of a person's preference for a particular outcome. It is the personal value workers place on the rewards they believe they will receive for performance. When valence is high, motivation is also high.
Expectancy refers to a person’s perception of the probability that effort will lead to performance. Instrumentality is a person’s perception of the probability that certain outcomes are attached to performance. Thus an individual is motivated by the perceived reward available to him for accomplishing a goal. For example, an employee who feels that his promotion depends upon his excellent performance, then there are two outcomes, namely, first level outcome, i.e., excellent performance and the second level outcome, i.e., his promotion. Here his valence should be considered. Valence for a reward is unique to each employee. His valence, (i.e., strength of preference for the particular outcome) may be positive, neutral or negative. If his desire for promotion is high, his valence will be positive. If he is indifferent to promotion, valence will be zero and if he dislikes promotion, then it will be negative. Here the employee would be motivated towards excellent performance because of his preference to be promoted. The excellent performance, i.e., the first level outcome is being seen as instrumental in getting his promotion, i.e., second level outcome.

Thus according to Vroom, motivation is the product of valence, expectancy and instrumentality. This theory represents a comprehensive, valid and useful approach to understanding motivation.
2.8 Porter and Lawler Model

A much more complex model of work motivation based on expectancy theory - probably a refined and extended Vroom's model was developed by L.W. Porter and E.E Lawler\textsuperscript{15}.

This theory states the relationship between efforts, performance, rewards and satisfaction. The individual effort of an employee is basically dependant upon the value of expected reward. Thus in anticipation of the expected reward, employee effort leads to better performance. But for better performance, a person must have the necessary abilities and skills. Efforts and performance cannot be equated. In between them, traits and abilities have a play. The performance leads to rewards - either intrinsic rewards which is one built in by oneself for his good performance or extrinsic rewards like pay, promotion etc. which are given by organization. Satisfaction is invariably connected with rewards. If the actual rewards are greater than the perceived reward, employee gets satisfaction and vice versa. This satisfaction will have an influence on the future personal values.

Although this theory is proved to be quite complex and difficult to measure, it is more applications oriented model. Despite its complexities, the
efforts - performance - reward - satisfaction system provides a very useful tool for understanding human behaviour in organizations.

2.9 Reinforcement Theory

Reinforcement theory applies the behaviorist learning theories to motivation. Also called Organizational Behaviour Modification Theory or O.B. Model developed by B.F Skinner is quite different from the cognitive theories of motivation. While cognitive theories like Maslow's need hierarchy argues that internal needs lead to behaviour, reinforcement theory states that external consequences tend to determine behaviour. It ignores the inner state of needs of the individual.

Reinforcement theory reveals that human behaviour can be explained in terms of the previous positive or negative outcomes of that behaviour. This is truly a behaviouristic approach where one can see that reinforcement conditions behaviour. The repeating behaviors that people have learned will produce pleasant outcomes. Those behaviors, which are rewarded, tend to be repeated and those behaviors, which are either not rewarded or punished, tend to disappear.

Behaviour modification is based on the idea that behaviour depends on its consequences and therefore, it is possible to control a number of employee
behaviors by manipulating their consequences. Skinner is of the opinion that people’s behaviour can be controlled and shaped by reinforcing desired behaviour consecutively. When the reinforced behaviour is repeated, the unrewarded behaviour tends to disappear. If the behaviour is not as precise as desired by a superior, repeated reinforcements in the desired direction can move the actual behaviour close to the desired behaviour. Thus reinforcement provides a strong and powerful means of shaping behaviour. It should be applied in conjunction with the principles of social learning\textsuperscript{16}. Rewards or reinforcements must meet an employee’s specific needs and must be applied equitably. Management personnel should have a clear idea about the behaviour they want to encourage and consistent in reinforcing them.

2.10 Adam’s Equity Theory

Evolved from social comparison theory, Adam’s theory of Equity\textsuperscript{17} is considered as one of the popular social exchange theories, gained widespread attention only in the recent past. Developed by J. Stacy Adams, Equity theory states that a major input into job performance and satisfaction is the degree of equity or inequity that people perceive in their work situation.

In simple terms, this theory states that equity occurs when the ratio of a person’s outcome to his inputs equals to the ratio of another person’s output to
inputs. Inequity occurs when a person perceives that the ratio of his outcomes to inputs and the ratio of a relevant other's outcomes to inputs are unequal. Here, the inputs (ex: education, social status, qualifications, age, organizational positions etc) and outputs (ex: rewards such as pay, promotion, the intrinsic interest in the job etc) of a person and other are based up on the person's perceptions. Equity theory assumes that people assess their performance and attitudes by comparing both their contribution to work and the benefits they derive from it to the contributions and benefits of another person. Equity theory further states that a person is motivated in proportion to the perceived fairness of the rewards received for a certain amount of effort as compared to others. The theory recognizes that individuals are concerned not only with the absolute amount of rewards they receive for their efforts, but also with the relationship of this amount to what others receive. People make judgments as to the relationship between their inputs and outcomes and the inputs and outcomes of others.

Equity theory tells that individuals are motivated to reduce any perceived inequity. They strive to make the ratios of outcomes to inputs equal. When inequity exists, the person making the comparison strives to make the ratios equal by changing either the outcomes or the inputs, thereby return to a condition of equity.
This process theory of motivation is not free from criticism. It is difficult to assess the perception of employees. It is quite difficult to choose another comparable person. Nevertheless, Equity theory continues to offer some important insights into employee motivation.

2.11. Motivation is a basic psychological process. It is the willingness to put forth effort in the pursuit of organizational objectives. Various theories have been associated with motivation—need theories, expectancy theories, reinforcement theory, equity theory etc.

Maslow theory states that individuals have a hierarchy of needs—from the most basic needs to the highest level of self-actualization. Alderfer refined the Maslow's theory into three need categories: Existence, Relatedness and Growth. This theory is known as ERG theory. McClelland and his associates focused on needs similar to the higher order needs set by Maslow. McClelland identified the three motives: Need for power, Need for achievement and the Need for Affiliation. Among this the need for power tops the other needs. Herzberg and his associates viewed motivation under two sets of factors—job context factors and job content factors in the context of job environment. Herzberg model is useful as an explanation for job satisfaction.

The management of any business organization should have a proper understanding on some philosophies of human nature such as Mc Gregor's Theory
X and Theory Y, which exemplifies the positive and negative assumptions about human nature. Argyris’ Immaturity - maturity Theory says that people in work organizations will have a tendency to grow from an infant to a matured state. What is required is that the organization should be flexible enough to adjust the growth, which is beneficial both to the workers and the organization.

The expectancy model of Vroom and the extensions and refinements provided by Porter and Lawler help explain the important cognitive variables and how they relate to one another in the complex process of work motivation. Added to this, Porter and Lawler model explains the relationship of various variables in between efforts and satisfaction. In reinforcement theory, human behaviour is explained in terms of the previous positive or negative outcomes of that behaviour. Equity theory assumes that people assess their performance and attitudes by comparing their contribution to work and the benefits they derive from it to those of a comparable other.

Abraham H. Maslow is the pioneer who developed the theory of motivation. All subsequent theories on motivation have been developed based on his need hierarchy theory. In spite of various limitations argued against it, this theory still holds good as it work with aspirations of human needs.
Reference


5. Ibid.


12. Ibid., p.59.


