



## **Enhancing Workers Productivity in the Workplace through Motivation: A Theoretical Overview**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*The activities of every contemporary work organization can only be actualized through the collaborative and combined effort of its members. The relationship between the work organization and its members is usually governed by what motivates them to work and fulfillment they derive from it. The manager or supervisor needs to understand and appreciate how to elicit the cooperation of his workers or subordinates and influence as well as direct their performance or productivity towards achieving the goals and objectives of the organization. The manager must know how best to motivate staff, so that they can work willingly and effectively within the organizational setting. This undeniably entails a complex processes hence, a herculean task for contemporary managers of work organization. In this regard therefore the current paper shall be preoccupied with the following issues: conceptualize underlying concept of motivation; identify the major types of motivation; and articulate the etiologies of demotivation. Also, the study outline the major consequences of demotivation; relevance/benefits of motivation; and strategies for motivating employees.*

**KEYWORDS:** Intrinsic motivation, Extrinsic motivation, Productivity

### **INTRODUCTION**

Fundamentally, work motivation is concerned with why workers behave in a particular way. It entails the psychological features that arouse a worker to action towards a desired goal and elicit, control, and sustain certain goal directed behaviours. Generally, motivation can be described as the direction and persistence of an action. It is concerned with why people choose a particular course of action in preference to others and why they continue with a chosen course of action usually over a long period and in the face of difficulties and problems.

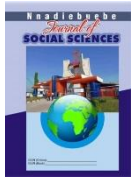
From a review of the nature of the concept of motivation by Mitchell (2010), four major features which underlie the nature of motivation are identified namely:

- Motivation is typified as an individual phenomenon. This implies that every individual/worker is unique. Hence, in motivating workers, this uniqueness must be considered.
- Motivation is usually perceived as intentional. In other words, motivation is assumed to be under workers control and

behaviours that are influenced by motivation such as efforts expended are seen as choice of action.

- Motivation is multi-faceted. This means that, there are two factors of greatest importance in work motivation, namely: (1) what get workers activated (aroused); (2) the force of an individual worker to engage in desired behavior (direction/choice of behavior).
- The goal of work motivation is essentially to predict work behavior. This implies that motivation is not the behavior itself and it is not performance rather, motivation is concerned with action as well as the internal and external forces which influence the workers choice.

In the light of the above characterization, work motivation can be broadly conceptualized as the degree to which an individual worker wants and chooses to engage in certain specified behaviours over a period of time. In other words, work motivation refers to the sum of the forces that produce, direct, and maintain efforts

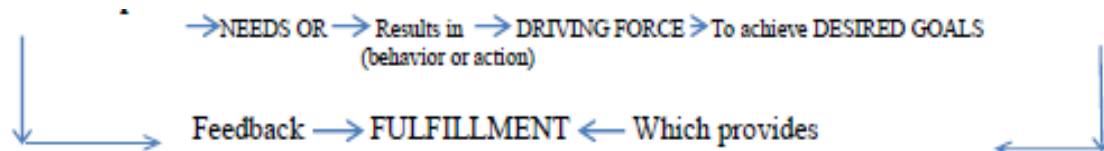


expended in particular behavior. These forces are not seen, we see only their results.

By and large, the underlying concept of motivation is assumed to be same driving force within individuals by which they

attempt to achieve some goals in order to fulfill some needs or expectations. This concept gives rise to the basic motivational model which is illustrated below:

#### **A simplified illustration of the basic motivational model**



Based on the above motivational model, workers behavior (productivity) is determined by what motivates them. Thus, their performance is a product of both ability level and motivation which can be explained by the formular that follows.

$$\text{Performance} = \text{Function} (\text{Ability} \times \text{Motivation})$$

Therefore, if the manager is to enhance work productivity and performance in the organization, due attention must be given to the level of motivation of its members. The manager must also encourage staff to direct their efforts (their driving force) towards the successful attainment of the desired goals and objectives of the organization. But, what is this driving force? What are the people's needs and expectations? and, how do they influence work productivity? Motivation is a complex subject and influenced by many factors. Individuals have different changing and conflicting needs and expectations which they attempt to satisfy in a number of different ways and manner using and adopting different types of motivation.

Essentially, motivation is broadly divided into two major types, namely: internal/intrinsic motivation, and external/extrinsic motivation.

Intrinsic motivation is related to 'psychological rewards' such as, the opportunity to use one's ability, a sense of challenge and achievement. Receiving appreciation, positive recognition and being treated in caring and considerate manner. In

other words, intrinsic motivation refers to motivation that is driven by an interest or enjoyment in the task itself and exists within the individual and is based on taking pleasure in an activity. Workers are likely to be intrinsically motivated if they:

- attribute their productivity to factors under their control also known as autonomy.
- believe to have a skill that will allow them to be effective agents in reaching organizational goals; and
- are interested in mastering and doing their jobs on their own rather than through compulsive supervision.

Research has shown that intrinsic/psychological rewards are usually determined by the actions of the individual managers (Legge, 1989).

On the other hand, extrinsic motivation refers to the performance of an activity in order to attain an outcome and such form of motivation comes from outside of the individual. Specifically, extrinsic motivation is related to 'tangible rewards' such as salary, and fringe benefits, job security, promotion, contract of service, the work environment, and conditions of work. Such extrinsic rewards are usually determined at the organizational level and to a large extent, are outside the control of individual managers.

#### **Etiologies of Demotivation**



Different theories suggest that human beings are motivated by different factors and all humans reach a point in their work life when they are simply not motivated. This is the case with most Nigerian organizations whose labour force is highly demotivated and job dissatisfied. Different ideas may explain why this ugly state of affairs persist. Individual's personalities certainly contribute to their attitude about their jobs. Managers and supervisors cannot do much to control these personal variables. However, managers and supervisors do control some other variables that can cause workers to loose motivation.

Nelson (2006) reported that many managers are relying on money alone to motivate their employees. This is true of most Nigerian managers. However, research has shown that in many cases, money can have a demotivating consequence. This explains one reason why people are not motivated in the workplace, employers are still not aware that money alone is not enough to motivate workers in today's work organization.

Often times, workers are not told about what happens in their organizations and this is the case with most Nigeria organizations. Romano (2006) reports that one of the cheapest and best way to enhance workers productivity in the organization is to show how his particular job is making a profit for the organization. When an organization accepts and treats a worker as a business partner, he will feel a sense of belonging to that particular organization. In most Nigerian organizations, managers and supervisors withhold valuable information from their workers, so as to maintain power in their organization. These affect employees' morale adversely and demotivate the workers.

Nelson (2006) also reports that workers will not be motivated to do their job if, managers or supervisors do not acknowledge workers performance. Thus, when workers are not given full recognition

and praise, they will not put in the extra efforts to do their job well.

In other words, lack of praise and recognition can decrease workers productivity and self esteem significantly.

Also, Nelson (2006) perceived that many managers do not take time to regularly meet and listen to their workers. In addition, specific performance feedback is not given to the workers to let them know how they are doing. In this regard, lack of communication between the manager and the worker is enough to frustrate the employee. When employees feel that the organization does not care about their welfare, employees conversely will begin not to care about their jobs and about how productive they are.

Other factors that cause workers to be unmotivated include:

- i. Delay or non-payment of salary and wages payment as well as other incentives;
- ii. Distrusting management;
- iii. Lack of training opportunities;
- iv. Uncarpentered/ ununconductive work environment;
- v. Poor management style;
- vi. Poor management/ union relations;
- vii. Organizational corruption and indiscipline;
- viii. Lack of job security; and
- ix. Injustice, etc.

### **Consequences of Demotivation**

After learning why workers are unmotivated in an organization one may wonder what consequences are in terms of achieving overall organizational goals and objectives. Many negative effects can occur.

Martinez (2007) reports that complainants can create negativity throughout the workplace in a short term. He compared it to catching a contagious disease even organization that has very optimistic culture can suddenly develop pessimistic cultures when complainants spread their negativity.



Beavers (2006) reports that it takes only one demotivator to erase any progress an organization has made towards motivating its workforce. Researchers have revealed that much negative behavior may exist in a work environment filled with unmotivated workers. They may display aggressive behavior on the job or they may begin to steal from the organization. This may have explained higher incidence of bank fraud in recent times. Carelessness, absenteeism, resource waste and substance abuse can all develop within organizations that do not take time to motivate their workers.

Furthermore, decreased productivity has been identified as one of the most important consequences of employee demotivation. Beavers (2006) reports that; a decrease or loss in production can cause organizations millions of dollars annually. Consequently, when production drops, profits naturally drop.

Nelson (2006) postulates that when an organization fails to motivate their workers, turnover rates increase. In other words, employees will leave their job and go to work for other employers who do a better job of motivating their workers. This will consequently lead to new recruitment and training which will cost the organization some fortunes and incidentally drain the organizations resources.

### **Relevance of motivation**

Work motivation is very important because of the following benefits it provides:

1. Put human resources into action: Every concern requires physical, financial and human resources to accomplish the goals. It is through motivation that the human resources can be utilized by making full use of its potential. This can be done by building willingness in employees to work. This will help the enterprise in securing best possible utilization of resources.

2. Improves level of efficiency of employees: The level of a subordinate or a employee does not depend upon his qualifications and abilities. For getting best of his work performance, the gap between ability and willingness has to be filled which helps in improving the level of performance of subordinates. This will result into :

- Increase in productivity;
- Reducing cost of operations, and
- Improving overall efficiency

3. Leads to achievement of organizational goals: The goals of an enterprise can be achieved only when the following factors take place:

- There is best possible utilization of resources;
- There is co-operative work environment;
- The employees are goal-directed and they act in a purposive manner; and
- Goals can be achieved if co-ordination and co-operation takes place simultaneously which can be effectively done through motivation.

4. Build friendly relationship: Motivation is an important factor which brings employees satisfaction. This can be done by keeping into mind and framing an incentive plan for the benefit of the employees. This could initiate the following things

- Monetary and non-monetary incentives;
- Promotion opportunities for employees; and
- Disincentive for inefficient employees.

In order to build a cordial, friendly atmosphere in a concern, the above steps should be taken by a manager. This would help in:

- Effective co-operation which brings stability;



- Industrial dispute and unrest in employees will reduce;
  - The employees will be adaptable to the changes and there will be no resistance to change;
  - This will help in providing a smooth and sound concern in which individual interest will coincide with the organizational interest; and
  - This will result in profit maximization through increased productivity.
5. Leads to stability of work force: Stability of workforce is very important for the point of view of reputation and goodwill of a concern. The employees can remain loyal to the enterprise only when they have a feeling of participation in the management. The skills and efficiency of employees will always be of advantage to employers as well as employees. This will lead to a good public image in the labour market which will attract competent and qualified people into a concern. As it is said, “Old is gold” which suffices with the role of motivation here, the older the people, more the experience and their adjustment into a concern which can be of benefit to the enterprise.

From the above discussion, we can say that motivation is an internal feeling which can be understood only by manager since he is in close contact with the employees. Needs, wants and desires are inter-related and they are the driving force to act. These needs can be understood by the manager and he can frame motivation plans accordingly. We can say that motivation therefore, is a continuous process since motivation process is based on needs which are unlimited. The process has to be continued throughout. We can summarize by saying that motivation is important both to an individual and a business.

Motivation is important to an individual as:

- Motivation will help him achieve his personal goals;
- If an individual is motivated, he will have job satisfaction;
- Motivation will help in self-development of individual; and
- An individual would always gain by working with a dynamic team.

Similarly, motivation is important to a business as:

- The more motivated the employees are, the more empowered the team is;
- During period of change, there will be more adaptability and creativity; and
- Motivation will lead to an optimistic and challenging attitude at workplace.

### **Strategies for motivating employees**

Motivating employees takes time and practice. Not all employees are motivated in the same ways. Mapes (2006) reports that motivating employees is all about what their priorities are in life. When managers realize what their employees’ values are, rewarding them becomes much simpler. It is important to remember that everyone is motivated by different values, and employees’ values may be quite different from a supervisor’s values. This is when communication becomes necessary so that a supervisor can learn what will motivate an employee.

Many managers still believe that money is the most powerful tool to use when it comes to motivating employees. However, research has shown this to be untrue. In fact, some of the most powerful ways to motivate employees do not involve money at all. Richer (2006) suggests that motivation is really about having effective communication between managers and employees. Keeping everyone informed about what is going on in an organization is essential. Motivation will not take place if employees do not



know what is going on or if no one listens to what they have to say.

Martinez (2007) agrees that communication is essential to avoid creating negative work environment. Straightforward, in-depth communication is one of the best tools to use when employers want to avoid low morale and negativity is one of the best tools to use when employers want to avoid low morale and negativity in the workplace. When changes are to occur in an organization, employers need to be 100 percent truthful. Important issues and decisions should not be hidden from employees. Communication is a powerful tool that managers frequently overlook, particularly in this part of the globe.

Nelson (2006) reports the following ten techniques that managers can use to motivate today's employees.

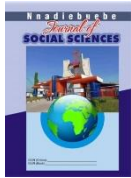
- Personally thank employees when they do excellent work. Thanks should be prompt and courteous. Thanking employees can be done verbally or in writing.
- Take the time to talk with employees. The best means of communication is face-to-face conversation.
- Give specific feedback about work performance directly to employees.
- Strive to create a work environment that is relaxing, fun, and open. Employees should be able to use their imagination and express new ideas.
- Show employees how the organization loses and make money.
- Allow an employee to participate in decision making processes, especially when a decision will affect that particular employee.
- Allow employees to feel a sense of ownership in their jobs and in the work that they do.
- Make rewards, promotions, and recognition based solely on employee performance.

- Encourage employees to grow and learn new skills to be used in the company.
- Celebrate an employee's performance when he or she is successful. Let employees know that their hard work is valued and appreciated.

Along with these strategies, a well-designed incentive program can offer promising results. Halloran (2006) outlines a structured program that a company can follow in creating such incentive program. First, a company must set objectives that are fair, specific, and easy to understand. It should measure results accurately. It should communicate the goals of the incentive program on a regular basis to employees. Memos are a great way to let employees know how they are doing. Rewards should be based on what the employee values. Paying close attention to lifestyle habits makes it easier for a manager to choose a suitable reward for an employee. Once achieved, success should be celebrated by both managers and employees. Finally, managers should incorporate their incentive programs into marketing plans. With a well-conceived incentive program, employees become more motivated and productive.

## CONCLUSION

The nature, processes and strategies of work motivation as complex as they are, imply a positive policy of investment in people (workers) as well as effective inter personal relationship approach to human resources management in the organization which in the long run worth the effort. It is in the belief of the author, that if the assumptions about what motivation as adequately articulated in this paper are religiously and realistically designed and implemented in the workplace, it will go a long way to radically humanize the work environment which will likely make for the



successful motivation of workers and lead to improved productivity.

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