

**MOTIVATION THEORIES:
IMPLICATIONS AND RELEVANCE TO MANAGEMENT
IN NIGERIA**

NONGO, S. E.

Department of Business Management,
Benue State University,
Makurdi

ABSTRACT

This paper attempts to assess the relevance and implications of motivation theories to management in Nigeria. Nigerian working environment may lend or not lend itself to the application of some of the motivation theories. The various motivation theories are diagnosed in the light of the Nigerian environment, highlighting their implications, relevance and impact on productivity. It is discovered that no single theory is the best for motivating Nigerian workers, rather, Nigerian managers should see the theories as complementary and mix one theory with another to motivate Nigerian workers to contribute maximally towards the attainment of the goals of their organizations.

INTRODUCTION

There are several theories and principles in the field or discipline of management. The theories and principles serve as a guide to managerial action and are generally universal in application. Among the several theories and principles of management, there are theories on motivation. Motivation theories are meant to serve as guide to managers in their approach towards motivating staff in organizations. In general, motivation theories attempt to describe what human beings are and what they can become. The theories hold true of human behaviour and its impact on productivity. The aim of this paper is to highlight the various motivation theories, their impact on productivity, relevance and implications to motivational approach by management in the Nigerian working environment.

MOTIVATION

Motivation is the concept used when we describe the forces acting on or within an individual to initiate and direct behaviour. Motivation is a force within an individual that impact on work behaviour in organizations. According to Pinder (1984) "motivation is a set of energetic forces, originating both within and outside the individual that initiate behaviour and determine its form, direction, intensity and duration." Motivation brings out the best in individuals and spurs or induces them to contribute their maximal efforts towards the achievement of goals of organizations. Stoner et al (2000) share this view as they state that "motivation is a human psychological characteristic that contributes to a person's degree of commitment. It includes the factors that cause, channel, and sustain human behaviour in a particular committed direction." The commitment that is elicited from individuals by virtue of motivation variables is to assist organizations achieve goals.

Motivation is an explanatory concept. It is used in understanding the behaviours we observe. That is, motivation is inferred. Instead of measuring motivation directly we rather manipulate certain conditions and observe how behaviour changes. Motivating employees is important to organizations because motivated employees strive to find the best way to perform their jobs, and are interested in producing high quality products or services, in addition they tend to be productive.

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Managers are faced with the onerous task of motivating a diverse and in many respects unpredictable group of people. To predict behaviour with any accuracy, a manager must know something about an employee's goals and about the actions that the employee has to take to achieve them. Several motivation theories and research findings attempt to provide explanations of this behaviour-outcome relationship.

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Motivation theories attempt general explanation of the forces within an individual and how the forces can be harnessed for the attainment of group goals. However finding a universal set of principles to motivate employees is not likely to occur. Indeed Gibson et al (1991) asserts that, there is simply no one approach for managers to learn and apply. There are many theories on motivation. Motivation theories can be divided into content and process theories.

Content Theories

The content theories of motivation according to Gibson et al (1991) focuses on the factors within the person that energise, direct, sustain, and stop behaviour. The content theories focus on individual needs in explaining job satisfaction, worker behaviour, and reward systems. The four content theories are Needs Hierarchy, ERG theory, Two-factor Theory and Learned Needs Theory.

Needs Hierarchy Theory

Needs hierarchy theory as proposed by Maslow (1943) identifies five basic needs that every individual attempt to satisfy. The efforts and behaviour changes observed in individuals are meant to achieve one of the needs. A satisfied need ceases to motivate. The needs are physiological, safety, social, esteem and self actualization. Physiological is the lowest while self actualization is the highest in the hierarchy of needs. In developed societies or economies, physiological and safety needs are provided and guaranteed by the society, and so managers strategies are aimed at eliciting behaviour that satisfies the social, esteem and self actualization need of the staff. In the Nigerian context, managers spend more time on strategies for satisfying the two lowest needs for staff. This is due to the fact that the basic needs are not provided by the larger society and perhaps throughout a staff's working life, he will be struggling with satisfying the lowest needs. It portends that if Nigerian managers use strategies for the highest needs, the desired behavioral changes in most

Nigerian workers may not materialize as Maslow asserts that a person attempts satisfying the more basic needs before directing behaviour towards satisfying upper level needs.

As a result of the diverse and polarized nature of the Nigerian society, the social needs of most Nigerian workers are hardly satisfied within organizations. An average Nigerian worker views his co-worker as a competitor rather than a complementor in the task of achieving goals of organizations. This tend to create strife, tension and discord among staff thereby reducing the capability and capacity of organizations serving as avenues for satisfying social needs of workers. In the same vein, an average Nigerian worker has little desire to satisfy esteem and self actualization need. This perhaps can be explained that due to the "Federal Character Concept" and cultural background, most Nigerian workers do painfully understand that they cannot realize their potentials and also achieve esteem within certain organizations and for such workers, esteem and self actualization ceases to be a motivator. Current appointments and promotions in civil service and other organizations in Nigeria is a pointer to this fact.

ERG Theory

Existence, Relatedness and Growth theory by Alderfer (1972) identifies individual needs and categorise it similar to Maslow. Alderfer's existence needs is equivalent to Maslow's physiological and safety needs. Relatedness, similar to social need and Growth likened to esteem and self actualization needs of Maslow. The theory suggests a frustration-regression process at work. This translates that continual frustration at attempts on satisfying growth needs causes relatedness needs to reemerge as a major motivating force, thereby causing the individual to redirect efforts

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towards satisfying a lower order need category

Alderfer's explanation of motivation provides an interesting suggestion to Nigerian managers about behaviour. In a situation where a subordinate's higher order needs (growth) are being blocked due to company policy or lack of resources, then it is in the best interest of the organization for Nigerian managers to attempt to redirect the subordinate efforts towards other categories of needs. Individuals are motivated by a desire to satisfy any of the three levels of needs. The Nigerian working environment being actually a recurring frustrating attempt at need satisfaction by workers, makes the theory relevant and promising for Nigerian managers and staff.

Herzberg Two Factor theory

Two-factor theory of motivation as enunciated by Herzberg et al (1959) identifies two types of factors in the workplace, satisfiers and dissatisfies. The dissatisfies are needed to maintain at least a level of "no dissatisfaction" and are often referred to as hygiene factors. The dissatisfies factors are the salary, job security, working conditions, status, company procedures, quality of supervision, quality of interpersonal relations among peers, with superiors, and with subordinates.

The presence of these conditions to the satisfaction of the employee does not necessarily motivate him, but their absence results in dissatisfaction among employees. The satisfiers are those conditions that build strong levels of motivation that result in good job performance. The conditions necessary for satisfiers (motivation) are achievement, advancement, recognition, the work itself, responsibility, and the possibility of growth.

This theory is popular among managers as it identifies the specific job factors that managers can manipulate to create motivation. Nigerian managers can manipulate the identified factors to enhance motivation of their staff. In most organizations in Nigeria, the dissatisfies conditions are absent. Issues in industrial conflicts are often centred on the hygiene factors. Many times, the hygiene factors are not provided yet the conflicts are resolved not to the satisfaction of the workers but to avert a threat to their jobs.

The Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) December, 2002 industrial conflict with Nigerian Government, which lasted for five months, is a pointer to unresolved industrial conflicts. The conflict centred on

hygiene factors. Most Nigerian managers it can be said ignore and discard Herzberg explanation of the motivating factors in an organization. The hygiene factors are not provided and even when sought by Nigerian workers, through conflict, most managers prefer to intimidate, threat and disband trade unions. Some Nigerian management do not think of providing the satisfiers, which according to Herzberg are the factors that motivate staff.

Providing the dissatisfies in Nigerian organizations could on its own achieve two things remove the dissatisfies and also serve as motivation. Indeed Nwachukwu (1992) shares this view as he states that "Herzberg listed money as a dissatisfies, but evidence points to the fact that money can be either a motivator or a dissatisfies depending on the individual's pressing needs." In our society, the salary could serve as a means to realizing the factors that Herzberg termed as satisfiers advancement, achievement, recognition. When an employee earns an adequate salary, he could be recognised by his wealth, his responsibility will be enormous and he will have a fulfilment of being an achiever.

Learned Needs theory

McClelland (1962) proposed a learned needs theory of motivation. It is believed that many needs can and are acquired from the culture of a society. Three of these learned needs are achievement, affiliation and power. When a need is strong in a person, its effect is to motivate that person to use behaviour leading to its satisfaction. He purports that entirely economically backward cultures (nations) can be dramatically improved by stimulating the need for achievement in the populace. He contends also that motivation could be taught.

The theory suggests that needs can be taught and learned through training, its relevance is that Nigerian management can intervene through training to develop needs that are compatible with organizational goals. However, a large body of literature states that the acquisition of motives normally occurs in childhood and is difficult to alter in adulthood.

Process Motivation Theories

Process motivation theories attempt to explain and describe how behaviour is energized, directed, sustained, and stopped. The four major process theories are Reinforcement, Expectancy, Equity and Goal setting theories.

Reinforcement theory

Reinforcement theory was propounded by Skinner (1969). It involves people's memory of past stimulus response consequence experiences. It is hinged on the idea that the consequences of behaviour (reward or punishment) are critical in determining future behaviour. That is, the nature of reinforcements and punishments and how they are employed influences behaviour. The individual's own voluntary behaviour (response) to a situation or event (stimulus) is the cause of specific consequences. If those consequences are positive, the individual will in the future tend to have similar responses in similar situations. If those consequences are unpleasant, the individual will tend to change his behaviour in order to avoid them. A person is motivated when he responds to stimuli in consistent patterns of behaviour over time.

The theory gives management insight into how past behaviour, reward system can affect future behaviour and motivation. With this in mind Nigerian management need to get information on the performance of employees and feedback the information to the employees in a timely fashion so as to reinforce their behaviour and motivation. The Nigerian manager, saddled with extra task of maintaining and sustaining facilities like water, electricity and telephone in the organization may be overstretched if he is to seek information and feedback to employees, management view of their performance.

Expectancy theory

Expectancy theory was developed by Vroom (1964). This theory of motivation is primarily about the expectations of a person and how the expectations influence behaviour. The theory views behaviour as the product of what employees believe will happen in the future. Expectancy theory implies that employees allocate their behaviour based on anticipated consequences of actions. That is, workers weigh the information available to them and make decisions according to the value of the consequences and their own probabilities of achieving what they prefer.

Nigerian managers can use the theory in developing motivation programs. Individuals normally prefer different outcomes and so motivation programs should be flexible enough to address such differences in individual preference. In addition, managers should link desired outcomes to the performance goals of the organization so that employees will believe that hardwork and good performance result in outcomes they prefer. Nwachukwu (1992) agrees with this view as he states that, "it is through the

linkage of performance and reward that an individual achieves individual motivation.” In the same vein, he reiterated that, a manager that identifies valued needs and rewards effort will motivate employees.

This theory is complex to understand and apply, as it does not provide systematic approach to guide Nigerian managers as to which outcomes are relevant to a particular individual in a situation. The complexity of the model, Nigerian working environment and staff creates additional managerial task for management in Nigeria.

Equity Theory

Adams (1963) developed the equity theory of motivation. This theory assumes that individuals who work in exchange for rewards are motivated by a desire to be equitably treated at work. In other words, the major factor in job motivation is the individual's evaluation of the equity or fairness of the reward received. This equity of reward is assessed by comparing rewards of others for similar input and where inequity exists, the employees adjust their behaviour by exerting less effort or more as the case may be. Individuals may not adjust behaviour in a one-time inequity situation and can tolerate a series of unfair events but the inequity or unfairness should not be beyond the tolerance limit of the individual.

Management of organizations can apply this theory but must recognize that resource availability vary from one organization to another. The reward system need be synchronized with organizational resources so as to be fair and equitable to the staff and the organization. Inequity is a perception and so it is difficult to identify and rectify. This may cause employees in one company to compare their reward system with employees in another company that are poles apart. This unfair comparison may result to a feeling of inequity by some employees. It is worthwhile for management in Nigeria to seek information and act appropriately to rectify a justified inequity but should bear in mind the advice of Gibson et al (1991) “correcting one perceived inequity may result to creating another inequity in another situation.”

Goal-Setting Theory

Locke (1968) propounded the goal setting theory. An individual's conscious goals and intentions are the primary determinants of behaviour. Where goals are set, can be measured and sustained, more efforts are directed towards achieving the goals. Individuals are allowed to participate

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Where goals are set, can be measured and sustained, more efforts are directed towards achieving the goals. Individuals are allowed to participate in goal setting and generally the more difficult the goal is, the higher the level of performance especially if the goal is thought of being attainable.

This theory helps in identifying and clarifying goals of organizations and also assist in soliciting efforts to achieve the goals. Its relevance is that it can serve as a control device to monitor or assess staff performance. The application of this theory by Nigerian managers will exert higher performance from employees, as all efforts will be aimed at the accomplishment of the task or goal. This will tend to reduce cost of operations, increased profit, improved goods and services to the society. The value of goal setting is reflected in a statement by Latham et al (1975):

The setting of a goal that is both specific and challenging leads to an increase in performance because it makes it clearer to the individual what he is supposed to do. This in turn may provide the worker with a sense of achievement, recognition and commitment in that he can compare how well he is doing now versus how well he has done in the past and in some instances, how well he is doing in comparison to others.

Goal setting theory creates the intrinsic factors as propounded by Herzberg and so it can be applied by Nigerian managers to motivate Nigerian staff. Jobs that are simple and measurable lend themselves to this theory like the jobs of clerks, typists, and technicians. The theory is however complex and difficult to sustain especially for jobs that are complex and their goals cannot be easily measured like teaching, nursing, engineering, accounting etc. Management should apply the theory in a context that its full benefits can be realized.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Each of the theories presented has something to offer Nigerian managers and various parts of the theories are complementary in many respects. No specific theory is recommended or discarded, rather Nigerian managers will be better off if they see these theories as opportunities in understanding and motivating employees in positive ways. Managers should take an active

1. Managers should intervene and help create an atmosphere that encourages, supports, and sustains improvement in staff performance.
2. Management should monitor the needs, abilities, goals and preferences of employees and should appreciate individual differences in abilities and preferences for rewards. This will assist them in employing a flexible motivational approach in motivating staff.
3. Managers as role models can be very influential in motivating employees. Social learning occurs on a regular basis, and so managers must be aware that their style, techniques, and work behaviour are being observed and can be easily imitated by staff.
4. Managers should endeavour to provide employees with jobs that offer equity; task challenge, diversity and a variety of opportunities for need satisfaction by employees.

CONCLUSION

Motivation induces increased staff performance in organizations. An understanding of the various motivation theories will assist Nigerian managers in their approach in manipulating staff behaviour to achieve organizational goals. No one theory is the best for Nigerian workers, rather the theories should be seen as complementary, a mixture of one theory with another to motivate Nigerian workers and spur them to contribute their maximal efforts towards the achievement of a better Nigerian society

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