

Employees Motivation in Organizations: An integrative literature review

Rajeswari Devadass¹

¹ University Tenaga Nasional

Abstract. *Aim:* The purpose of this paper is to present findings of an integrative literature review related to employees' motivational practices in organizations.

Method: A broad search of computerized databases focusing on articles published in English during 1999–2010 was completed. Extensive screening sought to determine current literature themes and empirical research evidence completed in employees' focused specifically on motivation in organization.

Results: 40 articles are included in this integrative literature review. The literature focuses on how job characteristics, employee characteristic, management practices and broader environmental factors influence employees' motivation. Research that links employee's motivation is both based on qualitative and quantitative studies.

Conclusion: This literature reveals widespread support of motivation concepts in organizations. Theoretical and editorial literature confirms motivation concepts are central to employees. Job characteristics, management practices, employee characteristics and broader environmental factors are the key variables influence employees' motivation in organization.

Keywords: work motivation, job characteristics, management practices, employee characteristics, environment.

1. Introduction

Scholars and practitioners care about cultivating, increasing, and maintaining work motivation. Motivation research has a long history of considering employee motives and needs (Alderfer, 1969; Maslow, 1954; McClelland, 1961). Interest in these areas peaked in the 1970s and early 1980s, and the last fifteen years has seen little empirical or theoretical research. The majority of work on motives and needs in the 1990s falls into three areas: an examination of the job attributes that motivate individuals, research that examines need for achievement, and research on the Protestant work ethic. Employee performance is frequently described as a joint function of ability and motivation, and one of the primary tasks facing a manager is motivating employees to perform to the best of their ability (Moorhead & Griffin, 1998).

Pinder (1998) describes work motivation as the set of internal and external forces that initiate work-related behaviour, and determine its form, direction, intensity, and duration. Work motivation is a middle-range concept that deals only with events and phenomena related to people in a work context. The definition recognizes the influence of both environmental forces (e.g., organizational reward systems, the nature of the work being performed) and forces inherent in the person (e.g., individual needs and motives) on work-related behaviour. An essential feature of the definition is that it views work motivation as an invisible, internal, hypothetical construct (Pinder, 1998). We cannot actually see work motivation nor can we measure it directly. The paper contributes theoretically by providing a rich description of many different factors that contribute to work motivation.

2. Method

I reviewed only empirical work published in English language journals. I apologize if I have omitted empirical work that should appear. However, I am confident that I have captured the available thrust of motivation work during this time period.

2.1. Data sources

Step one was a broad scope of the literature using electronic databases and these search terms: motivation AND employees, motivation AND organization, motivation AND work. The scope was limited to peer reviewed journal articles published in English between 1999 and 2010. Databases included Science Direct, Emerald Insight, Scopus, The ACM Digital Library, EBSCOhost Databases, IEEE Xplore, ProQuest, Business and PsychInfo. This review focuses on published papers.

2.2. Inclusion and exclusion

Articles were screened with an overall goal of finding a group of articles that focused specifically on work motivation. Editorial, opinion, theoretical and qualitative and quantitative studies were included in this review. Articles focus specifically on motivation and job characteristics, motivation and employee characteristics, motivation and management practices.

2.3. Screening

A three-step screening process was used to obtain the final sample of articles. Step one was a broad search of the literature to identify abstracts that met the inclusion criteria. Titles and abstracts were printed, duplicates were eliminated and the remaining abstracts were screened using the inclusion/exclusion criteria. Full articles from the retained abstracts were printed and read carefully to further establish if they met the inclusion/exclusion criteria.

2.4. Data analysis

Authors concur that a gold standard for completing integrative review data analysis does not exist (Conn et al., 2003; Kirkevold, 1997; Whittemore and Knafl, 2005). The goal of this data analysis was to determine the state of knowledge related to work motivation within this sample. To accomplish this goal we sought to determine patterns, directions, similarities and differences among the articles within the sample. Using a framework developed by Whittemore and Knafl (2005) as a guide, retained articles were read three times to determine the quality of the writing, to reduce and compare data within the articles and to analyze and synthesize themes and patterns within the literature sample.

The quality of each group of articles (theoretical/editorial/opinion/research based) was assessed using screening assessment tools adapted by the authors for this review. Research articles' quality was based on design, sample characteristics, measurement, statistical analysis and relevance to knowledge development (Kirkevold, 1997; Whittemore and Knafl, 2005; Whittemore, 2005).

3. Results

3.1. Search results

Original literature scope located 4184 abstracts and 52 abstracts were identified, printed and read by the author. Fifty articles were screened for inclusion/exclusion criteria, 3 articles were added after reviewing references from the 50 articles, and 10 articles were subsequently eliminated for a final total of 40 articles. Forty articles were retained for this review including 10 qualitative studies, 25 quantitative studies, 5 combinations of both quantitative and qualitative studies.

3.2. Motivation and the nature of job

Themes in this literature align within the following four areas: motivation and the nature of job, motivation and nature of employee, motivation and management practices and motivation and broader environmental factors. Table 3 outlines the summary of motivation characteristics in these four areas.

Table 3. SUMMARY OF MOTIVATION CHARACTERISTICS

JOB CHARACTERISTICS
Structures: <i>Objective relational structures of work, Task structures, Knowledge structures, Physical structures, Flat organizational structures/ Hierarchical organizations, Internal structures of organizations reflect [reporting hierarchies, level of worker autonomy.]</i>
Employee development: <i>Enriching job design, Participative decision making, Empowering nature of work, Job Advancement, Variety of Knowledge, Participative decision making, High level of knowledge, Develop Competencies, Sense of Achievement</i>
Positive work climate: <i>Employees have a common objective to attain, Employees have sufficient task interdependence, Employees are constantly interacting with each other to successfully execute these tasks, Variety of tasks, Social Interaction, Feedback from work,</i>
Perceived equity: Performance is linked to rewards, Fairness in the financial and non-financial rewards, Adequate pay, Adequate recognition, Freedom at work, Feedback from colleagues, Perceived equity with their peers, Equitable environments, Organizational justice
Work objectivity: <i>Clarity of goals, Goals are made explicit, Growth goals</i>

Nature of task/ task design: *Providing a motivating work environment, Providing a challenging and interesting nature of work, Providing a formal and informal communication, Providing autonomy, Job security, High-impact tasks, Worker involvement, Providing training.*

Task significance: *The impact employees are having on the lives of other people, client or customer, High degree of control employees have over day-today decisions*

Performance indicators: *The careful selection of appropriate performance indicators that can capture and reflect the employee's effort and performance*

Career path: *Opportunity for advancement, Promotion prospect, Career planning*

Work/life balance: *Flexibility in work times, Work location*

Need to identify with the task: *Clear goals, Personal interest; Understanding the purpose of task, how the task fits in with the whole; Having job satisfaction; Working on an identifiable piece of quality work, Having a clear career path*

Goal setting: *Complexity of the task for individuals needs to be considered when goals are set; Tasks that are straightforward for people require less information search and are easier to focus on;*

Job control: *Providing appropriate authority [control] and influence, which in turn improves the sense of achievement leading to better inclination towards the organization [dependency]; Urge to remain strongly affiliated [affiliation] to it*

Extrinsic/ Security Motivators: *Material reward, Progression, Status, Security*

Intrinsic/ Contact Motivators: *Interest, Affiliation' refers to the motivation to enjoy contact with people, Autonomy*

Values/ Growth motivators: *Personal principals, Achievement, Personal growth*

EMPLOYEE CHARACTERISTICS/ EXPERIENCE OF OUTCOMES

Characteristics: *Egoistic passion, Employee's have an "internal locus of causality, Desire to help; Emotional personality [the ability to separate one's emotional state from getting work done, had some impact across the motivational]; Attitudes to change, Pride*

Experience of outcomes : *Feeling of accomplishment, Job satisfaction, Pleasure of doing the work itself, Receiving respect from co-workers is very important, Receiving praise from supervisor is very important, Satisfying personal needs;*

Employee's drive: *Ambition, Goals, Energy and stamina, Persistence*

Level of education: *University degree, Higher level of education*

Employees need to avoid: *Failure, Criticism, Negative judgments by others, Loss of self esteem*

Employees level of activity: *Work under pressure, Cope with multiple demands, Accomplish a great deal within a rapid time frame*

Power: *Opportunities for exercising authority, Authority, Taking responsibility, Negotiating, Being in a position to influence others*

MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

Provides physiological needs: *Emergency salary assistance (advance), Arrange substitute employee if regular employee is ill, Pay salary on time, Provides equipment or facilities which is necessary*

Human resource management:

Through job definition and job descriptions, human resource management can help ensure that workers are aware of organizational goals, and of the role which they are expected to play in achieving these goals.

Through various packages of incentives, such as salaries, bonuses, promotions, performance-related pay, and training opportunities, human resource management can link performance to reward.

Good Monitoring System: *Quality of work, Progress of work, Punctuality of employees, Discipline of employees, Cleanliness of work place*

Managers Characteristics: *Supportive, Provided clear performance feedback, Encouraged subordinates to set career goals; Provide other mentor-like functions [encouraging the employee's to take on challenging assignments, and providing coaching and exposure*

Good management: *Senior management support, Team-building, Good communication, Show appreciation when employee did a good job, Regular meetings, Provide training, Positive feedback, Good interpersonal relationship with colleagues and subordinates*

Leadership style / behaviours:

Transformational leadership is positively related to intrinsic motivation

Strong transformational leaders can play a critical role in communicating the vision behind reform programs and also in gaining worker commitment to implement that vision.

Leaders must be seen as fair. To be seen as fair, leaders must be cognizant of an employee's concern with:

What was distributed to whom?

Who got the promotion?

Implement procedural justice:

Was I heard?

Did anyone take my viewpoint into account before the decision was made?

Implement interactive justice:

Do I understand the rationale for the decisions that were made?

Is the organization's leadership sincere in what they are doing, or are they being manipulative?

Company image: *Working in company that is successful (e.g. financially stable), Organization with commercial outlook*

BROADER ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS
<p>Communities: <i>Community expectations for how services should be delivered, The interactions that workers have with individual clients, Formal and informal client feedback on worker performance,</i></p> <p>Broader environmental conditions: <i>Effective police & the manner in which the reform is designed, communicated, and introduced. Example, top policy makers can shape the reform with little input from health workers and communities, with some participation, or with extensive dialogue and consensus building.</i> <i>Effective legal system may deter some of the most adverse forms of worker behaviour (such as theft and corruption).</i></p>

4. Discussion

The conceptual framework presented in Table 3 paints a complex picture of worker motivation, because worker motivation is a complex and dynamic process. Worker motivation is a complex process and crosses many disciplinary boundaries, including economics, psychology, organizational development, human resource management, and sociology. By drawing attention to this broad range of influences, this paper aims to help policy makers view worker motivation in a more holistic manner. This broader view will enable them to structure reform programs to more effectively promote worker motivation, and hence, improve their performance.

It is critical that policy makers consider a broad range of motivational determinants that they initiate incentives which all work in the same direction (organizational goals), and that the potential negative effects of new incentives are considered and counteracted with balancing measures. By “unpackaging” the various channels through which worker motivation can be affected, this framework can be used both to assess already implemented reforms, as well as assist policy makers seeking to evaluate how proposed reforms might affect worker motivation. At the core of the motivation question is how well individual worker goals are in alignment with the goals of the employing organization. Policy makers need to assess how well organizational structures and processes facilitate clear communication of organizational goals, provide timely feedback on performance to workers, and ensure that higher levels of desired performance are met with greater reward.

Each country must analyze its own particular constellation of organizational structures, culture, and broader societal culture to determine how best to approach the design and implementation of their particular job reform. Often, reform programs have focused on a very limited number of channels (e.g. financial incentives) to influence worker behavior, and neglected other less tangible incentives, such as the work itself, achievement, and recognition. Many of these reforms have resulted in little improvement in worker motivation, or even in reductions in motivation due to unanticipated influences.

Worker motivation is an individual and a transactional process. Different cadres may have differing determinants of motivation. In addition, the organizational context in which the worker is situated will mediate the impact of reforms. In the context of employees’ motivation, there is a complex combination of factors which has individual, organizational, and societal components. Consequently, effective programs will depend, not only on country level analysis, but also on regional, local and facility level efforts.

5. Limitations

This integrative literature review provides an overview and critique of the field of work motivation. This review is limited by the key phrases used for searching, the databases accessed, the frame and method of searching for literature, and time constraints. This review is also based on a broader scope of work motivation representing many job sectors instead of focusing in a particular job sector. Therefore the framework presented above may not suit all job sectors.

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