# THEORIES OF PERSONNEL MOTIVATION IN ORGANISATIONS

*Jide Ibietan*

**Abstract**

The focus and thrust of this paper is to arouse the interest and minds of Managers on effective use of Motivation based on available theories and their application in organisations. It is also instructive to note that discerning Managers know the limits or bounds imposed by over dependence on theories, and when peculiar circumstances require prudent use of initiative. This is the hallmark of managerial savvy which is indispensable in organizational effectiveness. This paper is segmented as follows: Meaning of Motivation; Theories of Motivation (Maslow, Herzberg, Mcgregor, Vroom and Alderfer); A sequence of critique relevance and application to organizations which also contain recommendations, and conclusion. It concluded by linking Motivation theory to management practice and recommended that managers must be sensitive to employees' needs in order to direct employees energies/creativity towards the attainment of organizational goals and objectives.

## Introduction

Contemporary philosophy on the management of organization and employees imply that deliberate plans, strategies and actions be employed to elicit higher worker performance with the sole aim of achieving the goals of the organization.

The inducement and practice enunciated by the management to a very great degree determine how realizable the organizational goals are, and it is apt to say that motivation is at the very base of this.

The attainment of organizational goals/objectives is a function of the caliber and output of the human resources. Result oriented managers know that motivation via effective welfare package/incentives for the employees is an irreducible element/criterion in attracting and retaining the right caliber of human resources and in eliciting the desired output level required for organizational success.

Weihrich and Koontz (1994:463) see motivation as "a general term applying to the entire class of drives, desires, needs, wishes and similar forces". Simply expressed, the authors see motivation as the drive and effort to satisfy a want or goal or an outcome.

Within the context of employment or organization, managers motivate employees by offering inducement, incentives and perquisites which they hope will satisfy the drives and desires that engender desired performance and activities by employees leading to the realization of corporate goals and objectives.

Another way of conceptualizing motivation is to see it as the process that account for an individual's intensity, direction and persistence of effort toward attaining organizational goal. (Robbins, 2000:155). Intensity in the above definition refers to the amount of hard work an employee puts up. This hard work when channeled towards realizing the goals and objectives of the organization can be said to be well directed. Persistence is however measured by how long an

employee can maintain his or her effort at work.  It can therefore be safely inferred that motivated individuals stay on a task long enough to achieve the desired goals.

Motivation can also be defined as "…a process in which people choose between alternative forms of behaviour in order to achieve personal goals" Cole (1997:75)

Perhaps in an attempt to overcome the lacuna in the above definition, Stoner, Freeman and Gilbert (2000:442) posit that motivation is a human psychological characteristic that contributes to a person's degree of commitment including the factors that cause, channel and sustain human behaviour in a particular committed direction.  The authors assert further that "motivation and motivating both deals with the range of conscious human behaviour somewhere between two extremes: reflex actions… and learned habits".

It is noteworthy that all the definitions seem to validate and synergise in order to give a true and adequate meaning of the term "motivation".  It is particularly instructive for us to see motivation as a form of behaviour capable of directing human efforts, energies and zeal for the realization of the desired goals which can be personal or corporate.  It can therefore be persuasively argued from the purview of work or employment situation, that motivation is employee behaviour caused by some stimuli geared towards achieving the personal goals of the employee and the overall objectives of the organization.

**Abraham Maslow Needs Theory of Motivation**
Maslow was the first psychologist to formulate a coherent theory on motivation.  He based his theory on the proposition that every human being have a hierarchy of needs which must be satisfied in sequential order, and he refers to them as lower order (physiological, Safety/Security, Social/Love) needs and higher order (Esteem and self-Actualisation) needs. Since these needs are varied and dynamic, they are arranged in hierarchy.

The breakdown of the Need theory is as follows:-
**Physiological:** Food, clothing and shelter

**Safety/Security:**  Security of life and property, the need to avoid pain, threat, deprivation as human beings, and economic security.

**Social/Love Needs:**    Acceptance by others (peers and larger groups).  In work situations, it can manifest itself in co-operative spirit between management and workers.

**Esteem/Ego Needs:**  Recognition and appreciation couple with a feeling of self worth.

**Actualisation:** Realising self-potentials or self-fulfillment and continue self development.
The point made by Maslow in corroborating this theory is that once a need is satisfied, it ceases to be a motivator of behaviour, hence all latent energy, skills and creativity are geared towards the next level of need.

**Maslow's Theory- A Critique**
The theory has bee criticized by David McClelland who posited that human needs can hardly be identified in five distinct stages or hierarchy, hence his theory on motivation based on achievement (n. ach); Power (n. pow) and affiliation (n. aff).

Another basic pitfall of Maslow's theory is that the time between the satisfaction of a need and when the higher one is taken over is hardly determinable.

The extent to which a need is satisfied differs with individuals. What a regards as motivating may be a dissatisfier to B.

Other critics include Fein (1973) Wahba and Bridwell (1976) in Balogun (1987) challenged the theory as being an economic theory. Thus leading to the prediction that as jobs become better rewarded and provide more security, the marginal utility and additional income will decline and the relative marginal utility of non-economic benefits (satisfying higher order needs) increases.

It is also plausible to argue that the vast range of human needs do not stand in five distinct groups. Money is probably the most important lone source of need satisfaction and depending on the situation, it may satisfy any of the needs.

Similarly, a form of satisfaction may compensate for another, for example, workers whose jobs permit little sense of achievement may make up for this loss by devoting time to social needs. ln essence, the demand for satisfaction adjusts to the supply for same.

## Application of Maslow's Theory to Organisations

The lower order needs of Maslow's theory comprises of physiological, safety/security and social/love needs which can be explicitly expressed as the need for food, clothing, shelter, security of life and property, the need to avoid pains, threat, danger and deprivation as human beings and economic security. The social/love needs include such things as acceptance by peers, superiors and larger groups. In work situations, it can manifest itself in cooperative spirit between management and workers.

Deriving largely from the criticism that identifies money as being the lone source of need satisfaction, it may be safely argued that the extent to which the physical and security needs of employees/workers are satisfied depends on the ability of management to provide adequate financial rewards in form of salaries, allowances and fringe benefits to meet these basic needs.

In America where Maslow developed this theory, it is estimated that about 85% of the working population have their basic needs relatively well catered for by employers/management.

In Africa however, in view of our socio-cultural system coupled with the extended family system, the questions that arise logically from this theory are: To what extent does the workers emoluments (apart from those employed in Multi-National Corporations) satisfy their basic needs?, To what extent does workers financial rewards reflect or commensurate with their level of input (that is input – reward analysis)? To what extent does financial pressure from the linear and extended family allow the worker/employee satisfy his/her lower order needs?

Time will however not permit one to fully answer the above questions, but it can be persuasively recommended that management must continue to improve upon wage levels, allowances and benefits in line with economic/inflationary direction in order to sustain a well motivated workforce that can contribute meaningfully to increase performance and productivity.

In most organizations or work settings, physical security is well handled and attended to by most responsible management as reflected by their sustained efforts on safety/security (measures) and effective means of supervision.

However in most private sector organisations, the notion of job security is a mere ruse or at best an academic exercise. The employment contracts are worded in styles that allow management to "hire" and " fire". With this in mind, management may find it very difficult to motivate an employee that already knows that he can be dispensed with on committing a simple wrong.

### Social/Love Needs

It has been observed that this need include such things as belonging, affection and/or acceptance by peers and superiors at work. It can even manifest in form of co-operative spirit between peers and superiors. Employees are therefore motivated when there are close personal contacts with management, when all employees are treated in the same way, and when close supervision is replaced with relaxed supervision.

However management in practice tend to be big in approach, complex and distant from the employee, usually employing formal means of interaction where the informal, loose and relaxed means of interaction/communication may produce better results and motivate the employees.

### Esteem/Ego Needs

It entails recognition, appreciation, feeling of self-worth/prestige and status. At work, factors such as job title, nature of work itself, amount of autonomy, power and responsibility associated with the employees' job are potent motivating agents.

The starting point of this analysis is for managers to develop an effective and objective appraisal system that recognize input level of each worker, create reward incentive/system that appreciates employees' performance and contribution to the productive process, better job design, description and evaluation techniques, improved delegation of duties.

In practice, management in this part of the world adopt very crude, faulty and faulted/titled appraisal systems, reward system hardly captures/recognize workers input/efforts. In the face of these odds, how can management effectively identify the esteem need of workers and utilize same as motivating factor?

It has been observed that the higher level needs have the potentials of yielding a sense of satisfaction to the worker, however, most managers do not create the right atmosphere or mindset (in employees) for its realization, employees therefore experience inner restlessness or dissatisfaction, hence no employee motivation.

### Actualisation Need

A self actualized person is one who has realized or translated all his potentials. He or she strives at nothing but merely sustains the level of actualization. People differ in their needs, but are there self-actualised mortals/human beings? This need is the weakest in terms of satisfaction among the Maslow's need hierarchy. One cannot but agree with the (Thomas).
Hobbesian view that the search for power after power is an endless human ambition that ceases only at death. Simply expressed, a self-actualised person is a dead person. Maslow must have included this need as an utopia or for mere academic exercise. Managers therefore may not be blamed if this need cannot be identified and utilized to motivate workers. The extent to which modern managers have identified this need in employees, let alone harness same in motivating workers may be a subject of further research.

Whatever is said or not said on Maslow's theory, it has its place in organizational theory and motivation as a strategy for realizing efficiency in work situations, provided management can effectively utilize the theory appropriately.

### Background of Fred Herzberg "Hygiene- Motivation" Theory

Fred Herzberg is another psychologist who further threw light on the need for a theory of motivation. He developed his two-factor theory on job satisfaction in which he identified motivators and hygiene factors, otherwise referred to as satisfiers and dissatisfiers respectively.

The motivators are intrinsic or job content factors which include achievement, recognition, advancement/growth possibilities, responsibility and work itself.  These are part and parcel of the job itself and workers positively aspire to achieve them.

Hygiene or maintenance factors are extrinsic or job context factors.  These comprise of company policies and administration, style of supervision, peer relations, relations with subordinates, status, pay, job security and working conditions.  Since they are sources of dissatisfaction, workers normally respond negatively to them, even though management often struggle hard to motivate workers by improving them.  The effectiveness of satisfiers as motivating agents depends on the existence of the hygiene factors in the right quantity and quality to neutralize dissatisfaction.

Herberg's two factor theory  seems to emphasise the job content factors and the need on the part of management to pay greater attention to upgrading them.

Most of the arguments canvassed under the sub-heading "relevance/application" in the Maslow theory are relevant here in view of the intertwining nature or similarity of the factors identified by the two theorists.

However like Maslow's theory, Herzberg's also has received a fair share of criticisms.

## Criticisms of Herzberg's Theory

Repeated studies on job satisfaction have failed to identify the existence of two independent factors corresponding to motivators and hygiene.  And thus the conclusion is that whether or not, job content or job context factors will motivate or only make workers happier depend on a number of environmental or psychological factors.

On the surface, one is tempted to agree that hygiene factors tend to make jobs more tolerable; tend to make the company a better place to work and hygiene factors do pay off in terms of better workers and harmonious relations.  However hygiene factors provide little direct motivation for employees to contribute more than a minimum effort.

The foregoing notwithstanding his work has greatly influenced what can be termed the job enrichment movement which adds motivators to jobs and more to the quality of working life movement.

## Background of Douglas Mcgregor Theory X and Y

Megregor agrees with Rensis Likert that managers operate two styles of management, traditional and modern styles.

He backed this up with painstaking research and he came to the conclusion that theory X tallies with traditional style of management while theory Y is motivation oriented and tallies with the modern style.

Megregor based his proposition on the premise that the assumptions of a manager about human nature and behaviour determine which particular leadership style he will adopt.  The same assumption influences every decision or action that the manager takes.

Again the actual policies and practices which the manager articulates in his organization also depend on his assumptions as well.

He emphasizes that the manager's assumptions are the cause and not the consequences of the behaviour of employees.  If for instance, the manager assumes that the workers are indifferent towards organizational goals and are treated as such then they will be indifferent.  This is known as self-fulfilling prophecy.  However, if he assumes that the employees are in the best position to direct their own efforts towards organizational goals and objectives, then close supervision could be replaced by

general supervision, thereby allowing employees to achieve their own goals while at the same time working towards the realization of the corporate goals and objectives.

As the self-fulfilling prophecy has revealed, theory X may be true and may work because managers simply believe it to be true and act as if it were true.

However, Mcgregor disagrees with the assumptions of theory X which were used in most industrial organisations.  He feels that modern management is grossly underestimating the interest and capacities of its organizational members/workers.

He also feels that these assumptions are inadequate for the full utilization of workers potentials.  It is however expected that modern managers will rise to this challenge in order to provoke motivated behaviour that can positively aid performance and higher productivity.

On the basis of psychological and social research results, Mcgregor submits an opposing theory called theory Y.  This he considers a more realistic assessment of the capabilities of people. Theory Y contains assumptions which could lead to greater motivation and increased fulfillment of individual needs and corporate goal/objective.

From the above submission therefore, rational and realistic approach demands that modern managers will harness the abundant potentials inherent in theory Y to propel a motivated workforce that can produce better results and industrial harmony.

In simple language, presented below is the component of theory X and Y.

| Theory  X | Theory  Y |
|---|---|
| - An average human being is lazy and dislikes work<br><br>- He must then be coerced to work<br><br>- An average human being prefers direction.<br><br>- An average human being also avoids responsibility. | - To an average human being, work is as natural as leisure.<br><br>- An average human being possesses self-direction.<br><br>- To an average human being, commitment is a function of reward.<br><br>- An average human being seeks responsibility and possesses a great deal of ingenuity. |

On the basis of sound research findings which make theory Y acceptable to modern management practitioners, it becomes compelling to identify the implications of theory Y.

**Implications of Theory Y**
Inherent in this theory is the idea of integration which means creating an environment by management in which workers needs, interests and goals can best be achieved through commitment to corporate goals and objectives.

Implied in this theory is the idea of participative and democratic decision making. This arises as a result of the concept that abilities and potentials are widespread in the population and confidence on the part of management that each person will behave in a responsible manner.

Also inherent in the theory is the undue emphasis that all employees will be motivated by self esteem while on the job. There is therefore the compelling need on the part of management to structure its organizational environment in a way that fosters the release of these tremendous human potentials. However this is not always true because some people don't feel comfortable where freedom is excessive and where all workers desire freedom, it may not be compatible with organizational goals/objectives.

In point of fact, both theories (X and Y) can be considered as extreme range of assumptions. Both theories are rarely used in their pure forms. Instead each manager should identify and appreciate the uniqueness of individual workers and treat them as such. In essence, there is a need for flexibility.

## Background of V.H. Vroom Expectancy Theory

Vroom focused his attention on individual/workers behaviour in organisations. He observed the work behaviour of employees with the object of explaining the process involved, and his assumptions were premised on the notion that observed behaviour would lead to motivation. The main method developed for this is referred to as 'objective observation'.

The key elements of Vroom's Expectancy theory are that motivated behaviour is a product of two variables listed as follow;
- The valence of an outcome for the individual
- The expectancy that a particular act will be followed by a predictable outcome.

Valence is the anticipated satisfaction from an outcome, whereas expectancy is a momentary belief concerning the likelihood that an act will be followed by a particular outcome.
Valence multiplied by expectancy is equal to force.
Motivation according to Vroom is force which literally translates to the pressure to perform an act.

The basic formula is: Force (motivation) = Valence x Expectancy.
Rewards (which may be intrinsic or extrinsic) are thus functions of valence. Vroom considered job satisfaction as an integral part of motivation. Job satisfaction was regarded as the conceptual equivalent of the valence (of job/work) to the employee.

The main variables affecting job satisfaction are: job content; length (hours) of work; emoluments; growth opportunities; group dynamic (at work) and supervision (style).

## Criticisms of Vroom's Expectancy Theory

Vroom's theory has been criticized on the premise that factors which determine the efforts a worker puts into his job is seldom accurately identified and adequately rewarded.

The theory has also been seriously castigated based on the fact that the factors which affect the relationship between employees' effort and actual performance may not be very clear. It was on this premise that Lawler and Porter (1967) selected some variables to develop a simplified model of expectancy theory.

## Implications of Vroom's Theory for Managers.

In order to effectively utilize Vroom's expectancy theory, modern management emphasise that managers must explore the following avenues:

Managers must continually seek to identify employee values and preference and harmonise same with the corporate goal/objective. This, no doubt will enhance employee motivation.

In order to fully motivate employees, managers must develop, publicise and offer rewards that are of value to employees. Rewards based on value can then be tied to performance.

Rewards have featured consistently in the previous analysis, the observation is that modern managers can do better than they are doing especially in the area of non-financial incentives. Also financial rewards should be monitored, reviewed regularly and adequately, having in mind the economic/inflationary direction in the country.

Managers also need to identify training requirements and resources that guarantee employee effort resulting in effective performance. Except for few organisations, the training need of workers in some organisations are hardly identified, let alone developed to the extent that workers would acquire requisite skills/knowledge that enable them perform or actualize their potentials. In terms of staffing vis-à-vis training in orgnisations, what is evident in some work situations is "Square pegs in round holes". Effective workers motivation in such instances however must witness a shift of emphasis from haphazard style to well-focused and articulate training and retraining programmes.

Modern managers would also have to embark on rational process of re-designing jobs to accommodate rewards sought by employees. It is to such an extent that the notion of job satisfaction which is an integral part of motivation can be meaningful to workers and the organization as a body.

This discourse can be better concluded by a comment from V. H. Vroom that:

> *Peoples reports of their satisfaction with their jobs are ... directly related to the extent to which their jobs provide them with such rewarding outcomes as pay, variety in stimulation, consideration from their supervisor, a high probability of promotion, close interaction with co-workers, an opportunity to influence decisions ... and control over their pace of work (Cole, 1997:80).*

## Background of Clayton Alderfer's "Erg" Theory of Motivation

Existence, Relatedness and Growth (ERG) theory of Clayton Alderfer can be described as an off-shoot of the Maslow's need hierarchy theory. Alderfer criticized Maslow and affirmed that human needs cannot be ranked in hierarchy but that same (needs) can preferably be ranked along a continuum. Alderfer claims that some studies led him to propose this theory which some scholars affirm is more dynamic than Maslow's theory.

Alderfer maintains that there are three groups of human needs as opposed to Maslow's hierarchy of five needs.

Explaining his theory, the "existence" needs correspond to Maslow's physiological and safety/security needs, otherwise referred to as lower order needs. The "relatedness" needs tallies with Maslow's social/love or belonging needs, while the "growth" needs correspond to Maslow's higher-level needs of esteem/ego and self-actualisation.

Although it has been argued that Alderfer's theory is more dynamic than Maslow's and that it allows for employees to deal with two sets of need at once and it is also upheld as distinguishing between chronic or prevalent needs and occasional needs, nonetheless, it has a basic pitfall.

## Criticisms of Alderfer's "Erg" Theory

A basic pitfall or criticism of this theory is that it lacks originality in its conception. The ideas borrow largely from Maslow's theory which it criticized and upon which Alderfer built his ERG theory. Put simply, having utilized Maslow's theory as a foundation, the ERG theory cannot lay claim to being original in ideas.

Like the Maslow's theory, there are some emotional and psychological underpinning that influence human needs which the theory (Alderfer's) did not take cognizance of.

**Implications of Erg's Theory to Organisations**

The foundation for analyzing the role of management in workers motivation using the ERG theory has been laid while identifying the impact/role of money in satisfying needs and by extension motivation under the Maslow's theory.

The "existence" need of Alderfer's theory corresponds directly to Maslow's lower level needs of eating/feeding, clothing, shelter, safety/security of life and property brings to the fore management's responsibility in ensuring that emoluments are fair and competitive enough to meet worker's basic needs. To the extent that management can recognize the place of this need in workers motivation, then corporate goals/objectives can be harmonized with employees' goals.

Management must continue to improve upon workers emoluments and fringe benefits in line with economic and inflationary direction in order to create the appropriate avenue for motivation.

Some modern managers have really exhibited high sense of responsibility by their sustained efforts on physical security/safety of work environment. However, most managers have been found wanting on security of tenure for their employees. A lot of improvement will be required as far as this subject is concerned in order to protect the average worker from arbitrary management decisions and excessive or over bearing management influence or tendencies in decision making and execution.

**Relatedness Needs**

It has been observed that this need entails affection/acceptance by peers and superiors. It an also manifest itself in form of cooperative spirit between peers and superiors. For managers to fully tap the benefit of this need as motivating agent, they must maintain personal contacts with employees, treat employees equally and fairly, maintain relaxed supervision as against the usual close supervision style and sustain better and informal interactive contact/sessions with workers.

**Growth Needs** of Alderfer's theory coincides directly with the higher level needs of Maslow's theory. It should be suggested for clarity that managers who operate very outdated, crude and faulty appraisal system should develop effective and objective appraisal methods and incentives that recognize and appreciate employee performance, input and productivity. It is in the implementation of these methods and the adoption of wider growth/promotional opportunities that the role of management in workers motivation can be effectively and meaningfully applied in organizations.

**Conclusion**

The attempt has been to identify what motivation is, identify motivation theories (out of which five have been discussed) and the role of management in workers motivation as it affect each theory. The discourse analysed and threw light on the implications for management practice and managers.

The link between motivation theory and the practice of management is crucial to management success. The place of employees in organisations or work situations cannot be overemphasized. It is to this extent that one can safely affirm that employees (people) are the only asset that can actively frustrate organizational goals. Management must therefore be sensitive enough to direct and channel the creativity and energies of employees towards achieving the goals and objectives of the organization.

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