

# Employee motivation, job satisfaction, live-work balance, material reward and career aspirations.

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**Abstract:** Companies and Organisations' existence, stability, and productivity depend mainly on their employees. This essay explores the factors that affect employee motivation, intention, and behaviour. It also examines three of the most recent studies on employee motivation and subsequently analyses these studies' findings against their chosen theoretical frameworks and assesses their contributions to the framework. The first study by Saraswathi (2011) hypothesises that different professions can influence how employees perceive motivational factors. The second study by Shaikh et al. (2019) hypothesises that motivators and hygiene factors are equally important in improving employee performance. The third study by Kyndt et al. (2012), hypothesises that although intrinsic motivators can contribute to employee's intention levels, satisfiers may make the inconvenience disappear but do not alter the employees' intention or behaviours.

The paper identifies gaps in knowledge that arise from these studies and further provides future research recommendations to understand employee motivation further.

The essay provides gaps in the study of employee motivation for researchers in this field to explore further to contribute to knowledge in the field.

**Key Words:** Employee, motivation, job satisfaction, live-work balance, reward, career, aspirations

## I. INTRODUCTION

Individuals fill job vacancies that require different skills and rewards in organisations and institutions. At the same time, individual job seekers look for jobs that provide them with personal satisfaction and rewards. How people feel about their work reflects the significant impact organisations have on people who work for them and productivity in the organisation itself (Sarker, 2016; Alagaraja and Shuck, 2015). The impact of employee motivation on the productivity of an organisation has led to the concentration of developing managers to motivate their employees effectively. The employee's performance is related to how motivated they are to achieve their goals. Employee possession of skill alone is not enough criteria to achieve high performance. Researchers have connected work outcomes to work variables such as job satisfaction (Squires et al., 2015; Sarker et al., 2015), commitment to the organisation (Inuwa, 2015; Jahufer, 2015), personality differences (Darrat et al., 2017; Monga et al., 2015; Spencer & Byne, 2016), and turnover (Talukder et al., 2014). Understanding the relationship between work variables and work outputs and the ability to influence those variables to enhance human performance in an organisation helps in analysing the health of an organisation. Understanding the relationship between work variables and work outputs and the ability to influence those variables to enhance human performance in an organisation helps in analysing the health of an organisation. Max Weber's theory of bureaucracy suggests how organisations can influence these sets of individual behaviours by creating intense situations in which most staff would act similarly. Even in strict bureaucratic settings, individual behaviour dictates how they act, and the organisation does not entirely control individual differences or determine how they behave (Du Gay, 2017).

This essay will explore the factors that affect employee motivation, intention, and behaviour. The essay will explore three of the most recent studies on employee motivation and subsequently analyse the findings from these studies against their chosen theoretical frameworks and assess their contributions to the framework. It will finally conclude by identifying gaps in knowledge from these studies and providing future research recommendations to understand employee motivation further.

*Selected Study, Theories, and Statistical Analysis Researchers Used*

The first study selected for the analysis is the study carried out by Saraswathi (2011), focusing on comparing the motivators of Information technology (IT) and non-IT employees working for the same company. The study's primary goal was to rank the importance of the identified motivational factors for both employee groups. The researcher sampled 200 employees working for the same company in India from IT and non-IT departments. The data collection method adopted by the researcher was the descriptive survey method, where participants were asked to rank the importance of motivational factors on a scale from 5 (very important) to 1 (not important) that motivated them to carry out their work. The motivational factors included the personal life, work itself, job status, job security, the opportunity for advancement, working conditions, good boss, company policies and procedures, achievement, recognition, job responsibility, and opportunity to grow.

Thus, in this study, the cause variables were the department of work (IT vs non-IT), as changes or manipulation to this variable could affect the dependent variable (effect), which was the motivation levels of employees (Mooij et al., 2016). For instance, if the employee transferred from an IT to a non-IT department, their motivation levels would be subject to change. Moreover, there are mediator constructs in the study, which are motivators. In this instance, the mediator construct explains how the two variables are related (Manafe & Setyorini, 2019). For instance, if an employee works for an IT department (independent variable), then their motivation levels (dependent variable) will depend on the status of the job, recognition or opportunity for growth (mediator variables). No moderating variables were used in this study.

This study was guided by Herzberg et al.'s (1959) two-factor theory. Herzberg et al. (1959) identified two employee satisfaction dimensions: hygiene and motivators. Hygiene referred to the dissatisfiers (issues that can decrease job satisfaction) such as company policies and procedures, supervision, salary, working conditions and interpersonal relations. On the other hand, the motivators included the work itself, achievement, recognition, responsibility and advancement. Thus, in Herzberg et al.'s (1959) theory, hygiene and the motivators are the cause constructs, whilst employee satisfaction is the effect constructs. The study by Saraswathi (2011) implemented all of these constructs.

Saraswathi (2011) used Spearman's rank-order correlation analysis to measure the relationship's strength and direction of motivation variables for both employee groups. The study produced different results for both employee groups. The IT employees perceived growth, work, and job responsibility as more important than other factors, while the non-IT employees perceived personal life and work as more important than other factors. At the same time, non-IT employees perceived growth and job responsibility as less important, which is opposite to what IT employees perceived as important. Moreover, the rank correlation indicated a

negative correlation in the ranks between the two employee groups. The researchers contributed to Herzberg et al.'s (1959) theory by providing evidence that IT employees judged motivators as more important to job satisfaction, whilst non-IT employees considered hygiene constructs more important to job motivation. In Herzberg et al.'s (1959) original study, motivators were ranked as more important than hygiene factors, not in Saraswathi's (2011) study. Moreover, some of the factors which Herzberg et al. (1959) referred to as "hygiene" factors were, in fact, the "motivators" for non-IT employees, thus contradicting the original study. The main contribution of this study is that different professions can influence how employees perceive motivational factors.

The second study used for the analysis was conducted by Shaikh et al. (2019). The study focused on establishing the factors that could improve the motivation of employees in a specific industry. The study used Herzberg's (1974) two-factor theory to assess the factors that would improve employees' work performance. The researchers sampled 455 employees from a Rafhan Maize company based in Faisalabad in Pakistan, using non-probability and random probability sampling methods. The participants were asked to rate the importance level of each hygiene and motivator factor presented to them. The researchers used questionnaires as a data collection instrument. The researchers used the ANOVA test for the analysis, whilst the multiple regression and independent t-tests were used to analyse the results. The multiple regression test was used to measure the strength of the relationship between the predictor variables and the dependent variable and the importance of the predictor in the said statistical relationship. The independent t-test was used to establish whether any statistical differences exist between the means of the two groups (hygiene and motivators) (Weissgerber et al., 2018).

In this study, the cause variables included hygiene factors (company policy, work security, working conditions, relationship with supervisors, salary and relationship with others) and motivators (career advancement, achievement, work itself, growth and recognition). The effect was the level of motivation levels reported by the employees using the Likert scale. Thus, career advancement opportunities, salary or relationships with others in Rafhan Maize could affect the level of motivation experienced by employees. The mediating variable in the study was the place of employment of employees (Raftan Maize), as the hygiene and motivator factors are specific to the company itself. Moreover, the moderating variable (which affected the strength of the relationship) was the employee's role within the company or the sector in which they work.

The study was guided by Herzberg's (1974) two-factor theory, which argued that employees do not get motivated by lower-level needs such as hygiene. The theory stated that hygiene factors did not encourage motivation but eliminated dissatisfaction from the job. Herzberg (1974) argued that motivation factors were more likely to motivate

employees and improve their work performance. The results from Shaikh et al.'s (2019) study indicated that both the motivators and hygiene factors from Herzberg's (1974) original study positively affect employees' performance at work. The descriptive statistics and multiple regression results indicated that motivators were statistically significant in indicating the intrinsic factors that improved employee performance.

Moreover, the descriptive statistics and multiple regression for hygiene factors indicated statistically significant in indicating the extrinsic factors that drive employee performance. Although Herzberg (1974) discovered that motivators were ranked as more important than the hygiene factors in increasing employee satisfaction in the original study, Shaikh et al.'s (2019) findings indicated that both motivators and hygiene factors are equally important in improving employee performance. Thus, the findings from this study contributed to the original theory by showing that although all factors are important in ensuring that employees perform well at work, it does not necessarily indicate that they are motivated.

The third study chosen for the analysis is by Kyndt et al. (2012), and it focused on factors that motivated low-qualified employees to take part in professional training and development to increase their skills. The rationale for the study was the observation that poorly qualified employees were the most vulnerable on the job market, and training and development could potentially help reduce that vulnerability. However, other researchers noted that poorly qualified employees have little to no motivation to develop professionally instead of the highly qualified employees (Freitas et al., 2019). The participants' sample included 652 low-qualified employees who were asked to complete a survey, and 15 of those participants were invited for a semi-structured interview. Thus, the study adopted a mixed-methods approach using a cross-sectional survey design. The analysis used for the study were the descriptive statistics (to collect the participants' characteristics such as current and previous job-related activities) and exploratory factor analysis (to analyse whether any of the characteristics from the study could be related) (Weissgerber, 2018). The study aimed to investigate the factors contributing to the intention to learn and develop low-qualified employees.

In this study, the cause (independent) variable is the presence of the motivational factors at a workplace, such as pay satisfaction, time management activities, self-efficacy levels, self-directedness or promotion opportunities, which influence the effect (dependent) variable of levels of motivation. On the other hand, the mediating variables in this study were participants' characteristics (such as their work-related activities), which would explain the relationship between the cause and effect variables (Manafe & Setyorini, 2019). Lastly, the moderating variable was the level of qualification of the employees; the more educated the

employee is, the higher their level of motivation to take part in the professional development is likely to be.

Kyndt et al. (2012) were guided by Ajzen's (2011) theory of reasoned action. According to this theory, the individuals' intentions guide their behaviour and actions; thus, it is rooted in motivation. Ajzen (2011) argued that intention is related to motivational factors, as it shows how much the individuals are willing to work towards something. Moreover, Ajzen (2011) argued that the stronger the motivation towards the goal, the stronger the intention to carry out the behaviour, and the more likely the action would occur. However, although the intention can motivate employees to undertake further training, it does not guarantee to make employees commit to the training. Kyndt et al.'s (2012) study adopted the constructs of motivators and intention.

Kyndt et al.'s (2012) study indicated that previous participation in training activities, self-directedness, perceived organisational support and undertaking time management activities were positively related to employees' intention levels. Contrary to Ajzen's (2011) original findings, where motivators were significantly predictive of intention in participants, the present study did not find any statistically significant relationship between pay satisfaction and employees' intention levels. Thus, Kyndt et al.'s (2012) study contributed to the theory, as it indicated that a distinction needs to be made between "motivators" and "satisfiers", as although intrinsic motivators can contribute to employee's intention levels, satisfiers may make the inconvenience disappear but do not alter the employees' intention or behaviours.

#### *Gaps in Knowledge*

Analysis of the three studies helped identify some limitations and gaps in knowledge. First, it became evident from Saraswathi's (2011) study that different professions can significantly alter how an employee considers hygiene factors and motivators. Thus, more research is required to explore the reasons for these differences between employees from different industries. Moreover, from Shaikh et al.'s (2019) study, it became evident that although hygiene factors and motivators can improve employee performance, it does not mean that their motivation levels increase too. Thus, further research is required to understand the reasons for employees' improved performance at work and the role of motivation in improving this performance. Lastly, from Kyndt et al.'s (2012) study, it becomes apparent that a clear distinction needs to be made between motivators and satisfiers and how each influences intention separately. Thus, future research could explore the role of satisfiers and motivators on intention and how this affects employee behaviour and performance at work.

## II. CONCLUSION

The essay analysed three different studies on employee motivation, each targeting the topic from a different angle. It also analysed the research methods and constructs

adopted by the researchers and their applicability to the theoretical framework. The essay argued that all three studies contributed to their respective theoretical frameworks. However, the essay identified several knowledge gaps due to analysing of the studies. The essay concluded by providing several recommendations for future research to help improve the understanding of employee motivation.

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