



## EMPLOYEE MOTIVATION AND PRODUCTIVITY: THE CASE OF ZAMBIA

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### Abstract

*Employee motivation and productivity are two areas that are key to the growth of developing countries, and Zambia is not an exception. The country, after 59 years of independence, continues to struggle with motivation issues and low productivity levels, and with the continued rise of globalization, there is a need to understand and address these issues. Unfortunately, while extensive literature and studies are available, particularly from developed countries, not much work has been done in this area in Zambia, and as such, this problem continues to grow amid the challenges that the country is facing, which include high poverty levels and the high debt burden brought on through mismanagement from the previous regime. As the country continues to push the development agenda, there is a need for the development of strategies and measures to manage the motivation of employees, which in turn may lead to higher productivity levels. This research study found that if motivational theories are correctly implemented in an organisation, this may result in more motivated employees, which could ultimately raise organisational productivity. In terms of the Zambian environment, it is evident that the elements of several (process and content) formulations of work motivation, which include, goal setting, two-factor theory, need achievement theory, and equity theory are applicable and valuable to developing countries and can help leaders in these countries to improve employee productivity.*

*Keywords: Motivation, Productivity, Intrinsic motivation, Extrinsic motivation*



## INTRODUCTION

Motivation and productivity are two concepts that continue to attract interest from scholars, practitioners, and business owners. Motivation has been argued to play a key role in an employee's work productivity in organisations as they strive to achieve their goals, however, not much information is available in Zambia in this field. With the world rapidly changing organisations today are also continually striving to find efficient ways of working that will ensure that their employees are more productive but more importantly that the employees are motivated. Motivation is therefore key to organisations and understanding the link between motivation and productivity is therefore critical as the world also continues to be dynamic and changing and for developing countries such as Zambia, it is critical that they start developing strategies that will ensure that productivity is high, with motivation being the catalyst. While noting the importance of motivation and that organisations and managers should be able to motivate their employees, this is easier said than done, as employee motivation is a multifaceted subject touching on several disciplines. However, issues of productivity are key to organisations and motivation provides that link which is key for scholars and practitioners to understand.

## THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

There are several theories that exist that examine employee motivation and productivity in organisations and seek to provide the basis and explanations for why employees in organisations are motivated. According to McCullagh (2005), if these theories are correctly implemented, they may result in more motivated workers, which could ultimately raise organisational productivity. Bhattacharyya (2009), notes that motivation is also described by different theorists as a process that governs choice and that the motivation process starts with a physiological or psychological deficiency or need that activates behaviour, or a drive that is aimed at a goal. According to Robbins et al. (2009), productivity indicates a concern for both effectiveness and efficiency, whereas motivation is defined as the processes that account for an individual's intensity, direction, and persistence of effort towards accomplishing a goal. Palmer (2005) also notes that a fundamental part of a motivation strategy is that the process of achieving the goal is itself motivational.

Employees are therefore driven to accomplish their goals through motivation factors which may be driven by an internal or external force that pushes them towards delivering on their set goals. Motivation can therefore be classified as either intrinsic or extrinsic motivation indicating that different stimuli will have a different impact on employee motivation and work productivity. According to McCullagh (2005), extrinsic motivation is the act of performing an

action to achieve a different goal, whereas intrinsic motivation is the desire for an individual to feel competent and proud of something. McCullagh (2005), also notes that human motivation can come from both intrinsic and extrinsic sources. Employee motivation and work productivity can therefore be achieved through either of the two motivational forces as it is from this motivational drive that the motivation process that ultimately drives action from the employees is ultimately derived from.

The pioneering motivation theories include, among others, Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory (Maslow, 1954); Theory X and Theory Y (McGregor, 1960); Fredrick Herzberg's two-factor theory (Herzberg et al., 1959); McClelland's theory of needs (McClelland, 1961); Skinner's reinforcement theory (Skinner, 1953); Goal Setting Theory (Locke, 1968); Equity Theory (Adams, 1963); and the Expectancy Theory (Vroom, 1964). According to Armstrong (2006), these theories led to an understanding of motivation and are underpinned by the motivation theories classified as instrumentality theory, content theory, and process theory. Based on Mullin's (2010) model of motivation, various theories of employee motivation are also discussed, including Skinner's Reinforcement Theory (Skinner, 1953), Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory (Maslow, 1954), Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory (Herzberg et al., 1959), Vroom's Expectancy Theory (Vroom, 1964), Locke and Latham's Goal Achievement Theory (Locke & Latham, 2004), and Adam's Equity Theory (Adams, 1963). These theories attempt to explain employees' behaviour and provide understanding to both managers and employees on how to motivate others and become more involved in one's own motivation (Drafke and Kossen, 2002).

According to Armstrong (2006), the emphasis in the process theory is on the psychological processes or forces that affect motivation, as well as basic needs. Armstrong (2006) also notes that the process theory is also known as the cognitive theory because it is concerned with how people perceive their working environment and the ways in which they interpret and understand it. Armstrong (2006) further notes that the process theory provides a much more relevant approach to motivation. Consequently, Steers & Shapiro (2004), note that central to the process theory is a series of cognitive theories that attempt to understand the thought processes that people have when determining how to behave in the workplace and one of the known cognitive theories is the expectancy theory presented by Victor Vroom as the first systematic formulation of the theory. Following Vroom's expectancy theory are other process theories such as the goal achievement theory and the equity theory.

Job satisfaction is another critical factor that needs to be taken into consideration to understand employee motivation and productivity. Dartey-Baah (2010), notes that Job satisfaction can be defined as a psychological concept that refers to job related attitudes and characteristics such as pay, reward, policies, leadership behaviours, management styles and

co-workers. According to Armstrong (2006), job satisfaction also refers to the feelings and attitudes people have about their employment. The more positive and favourable the employees attitude the more job satisfaction they are likely to have and the more unfavourable or negative their attitude towards the job signifies job dissatisfaction.

According to Wilson (2010), a person's degree of job satisfaction is influenced by both internal and external motivators, the standard of their supervision, their social ties within the group, and how successful or unsuccessful they are at work. Wilson (2010) adds that when workers are very satisfied with their jobs and are highly motivated, they are more likely to engage in discretionary behavior that contributes to the success of the company. According to Wilson's (2010) research findings and conclusions, personal expectations, career options, job influence, teamwork, and job challenge were the main elements influencing job satisfaction. Bryan and Sell (2011) note that there is a broad perception that earning more money enhances job satisfaction, but not necessarily because it makes you happier at work; rather, it raises the overall utility by expanding chances for total expenditure. While wages or pay have been traditionally recognized as the more important factors in rewarding employees, there are other factors that drive employees, and among these are benefits that employees enjoy, such as medical aid or education support for school children.

### **Theories of Motivation**

There are different theories of motivation formulated by different scholars and schools of thought. The earlier scholars, however, were heavily criticized, but they are important to the understanding of this field as they are part of the foundational studies for contemporary schools and are still applied by managers and practitioners.

#### ***Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory***

Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory is undoubtedly one of the most common theories in the world and Maslow hypothesized that there are five needs for a person.

1. Physiological – Food, thirst, shelter, sex, and other physical requirements.
2. Safety – Security and protection from physical and emotional harm.
3. Social – Affection, belongingness, acceptance, and friendship.
4. Esteem – Internal esteem factors, such as self-respect, autonomy, and achievement, and external esteem factors, such as status, recognition, and attention.
5. Self-actualisation – Drive to become what one can become which includes growth, achieving one's potential and self-fulfilment.

Maslow separated these needs into lower-order needs, that is, psychological, safety, and social, and higher-order needs, that is, esteem and self-actualization. This differentiation was on the basis that higher-order needs are satisfied internally, whereas lower-order needs are external and include things such as pay, employment contracts, and tenure. Maslow's view was that as each of these needs became satisfied, the next one became dominant. Unfortunately, Maslow's theory was criticized for lacking empirical evidence by the other schools of thought.

### ***Theory X and Theory Y***

Douglas McGregor proposed two distinct views of human behavior, with one negative-labeled theory X and one positive-labeled theory Y. This view was premised on what McGregor observed as how managers view their employees in the workplace. Under theory X, the managers believe that employees have an inherent dislike for work and therefore must be coerced, controlled, or threatened with punishment to do their jobs. And under theory Y, the managers assume that the employees can view work as being as natural as rest or even play, and therefore the average person can learn to accept and even work responsibly. Unfortunately, McGregor was criticized equally as Maslow for a lack of empirical evidence.

### ***Two Factor Theory***

Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory was modified by Fredrick Herzberg into the Two Factor Theory, also called the Motivation-Hygiene Theory. Under this theory, there are two different sets of factors: hygiene and motivators or satisfiers, and these affect a person's motivation and job satisfaction. Under this theory, hygiene factors alone cannot motivate workers to perform; they, however, help to maintain a level of low dissatisfaction in the workplace. Hygiene factors include several factors such as pay, working conditions, employment security, company policies, and the quality of supervision. The two-factor theory in summary states that the existence of the factors above in the workplace does not motivate by yielding satisfaction, but the lack of existence of these items would however result in dissatisfaction. Mullins (2005) is also of the view that the motivation-hygiene theory by Herzberg has extended Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory and that it is more directly applicable to the work situation. Herzberg's theory also suggests that if management is to provide positive employee motivation, then attention must be given not only to hygiene factors but also to the motivating factors.

### ***McClelland's Theory of Motivation***

David McClelland's Theory of needs focuses on the three needs as below.

1. Need for achievement (nAch) – This is the need to excel and to achieve in relation to a set of standards, to strive to succeed.
2. Need for power (nPow) – This is the need to make others behave in a way in which they would not have behaved otherwise.
3. Need for affiliation (nAff) – This is the desire for friendly and close interpersonal relationships.

According to Robbins et al. (2009), of the three needs that McClelland hypothesized and the subsequent research that followed, they focused most of their attention on nAch. Based on this need, employees in an organization are argued to accomplish the most when there is a need for high achievement, and employees with a strong need for achievement tend to set goals that are moderately difficult, desire feedback on their performance, and are generally preoccupied with accomplishment.

### **Goal - Setting Theory**

According to Mullins (2005), the basic premise of the goal-setting theory is that people's goals or intentions play an important part in determining behavior. The expectancy and equity theories of motivation have been criticized for having their primary focus on the psychological processes in work motivation, thereby providing little explicit theory and guidance that explains the role of contextual forces. The goal-setting theory focuses on the motivational effects of goals, targets, or actions and therefore overcomes these limitations. Mullins (2005) also notes that Locke accepts the importance of perceived value, as indicated in the expectancy theories of motivation, and proposes that these values give rise to the experience of emotions and desires and that people strive to attain goals to satisfy their emotions and desires. This theory explains the importance of goals or targets in an organization and how these can motivate employees if they are clear and measurable.

### ***The Reinforcement Theory of Motivation***

The reinforcement theory by Skinner (1953) is the reverse of the cognitive theories in the sense that this theory does not recognize the human thought process to a greater extent. According to Skinner's (1953) reinforcement theory, human behavior can be explained by consequences in the environment, and therefore, it is not necessary to look for cognitive explanations. Instead, the theory relies heavily on a concept called the law of effect that states that behaviors having pleasant or positive consequences are more likely to be repeated, and

behaviors having unpleasant or negative consequences are less likely to be repeated. Cole (2003) argues that, under the strict reinforcement theory, a person's own understanding, emotions, needs, and expectations do not drive motivation, which is purely about the consequences of behavior. However, this may not always be the case, as shown by the other theories. Robbins et al. (2009) also argue that the reinforcement theory ignores the inner state of the person and concentrates solely on what happens to a person when they act.

### ***Equity Theory***

John Stacey Adams, a behavioral psychologist and workplace expert created his job incentive theory in 1963, known as the Equity theory. The theory acknowledges that an employee's evaluation and interpretation of their relationship with their employer and workplace are influenced by a range of subtle and variable factors, much like many of the more widely recognised theories of motivation, including Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory. The theory is predicated on the premise that employees will become demotivated toward their work and the organisation if they feel their contributions are worth less than their output. Workers may respond to this in several ways, including demotivation, this is because they perceive a disparity between the inputs and their outputs, a drop in effort, an increase in irritability and in more extreme circumstances, maybe even disruptive behavior as they feel unfairly treated.

### ***Expectancy Theory***

One of the most widely accepted explanations of motivation is Vroom's Expectancy theory, which is based on three key variables, that is, valence, instrumentality, and expectancy. According to Robbins et.al (2009), the theory argues that the strength of a tendency to act in a certain way depends on the strength of an expectation that the act will be followed by a given outcome and on the alternatives of that outcome to the person. Based on this theory, expectancy can be said to be the belief that if an individual increases their efforts, the expected reward may also increase and therefore expectancy is what motivates a person to ensure that they have the correct and right tools to get the work done which could include inputs such as raw materials, labour, the right skills for the job, management support and the required information to perform the job. Instrumentality refers to the belief that receiving rewards depends on one's performance in the workplace, while valence is the importance one places on the expected outcome of their performance. It must be noted that Vroom distinguishes valence from value and therefore if a person may desire an object but then gain little satisfaction from

obtaining it. Alternatively, a person may strive to avoid an object but find, subsequently, that it provides satisfaction. Valence is therefore the anticipated satisfaction from an outcome.

### **Empirical Studies on Motivation and Productivity**

There are several studies that have been undertaken to understand the link between motivation and productivity. According to Bawa (2017), one of the early empirical studies on Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory tried to test whether the list of needs derived from American culture by Maslow is applicable to other cultures and the study found that managers had these needs and that they were important. In the study undertaken by Shkoler and Kimura (2020), the findings show that if job engagement is an organisational goal towards which the organisation is striving, then the respective managers in that organisation need to enhance their employees' work motivation, such as offering more rewards or challenges, which in turn increases the employees' propensity for translating that motivation into actual heavy work investment or on the job engagement.

Shkoler and Kimura (2020), further note the importance of moderation effects emphasize the need for smart and careful management in workplaces with international employees and urge managers managing these employees to pay attention to cultural differences when working from a country outside the host nation of the organisation. In the study conducted by Girdwichai and Sriviboon (2020), the findings show that there is a significant relationship between employee performance and employee motivation and that employee training has a positive but moderate relationship to employee performance. In the study undertaken by Machungwa and Schmitt (1983), the results show that the Zambian respondents feedback is consistent with elements of several (process and content) formulations of work motivation, which include, goal setting, two-factor theory, need achievement theory, and equity theory.

Further, Machungwa and Schmitt (1983), note that the elements of goal setting and need achievement theories present in the work nature cluster Studies such as their study may prove to be valuable to developing countries in so far as they help leaders in these countries improve employee productivity. This study's conclusions are very valuable as they show that employee motivation in developing countries is affected by similar factors as in the developed countries and therefore there is need for governments in these countries to work on solutions and strategies that will drive employee motivation at organisational level so that productivity is enhanced even at national level. The study undertaken by Stringer et.al. (2011), examines the implications of a pay-for-performance system on intrinsic and extrinsic motivation and examines job satisfaction of front-line employees at a retailer. This study finds a positive association between pay and intrinsic motivation and job satisfaction, while it found that there is a negative



association between extrinsic motivation and job satisfaction, with pay satisfaction having had the strongest association with job satisfaction.

Furthermore, the study undertaken by Dartey-Baah, (2010), found that employees who are happy with their jobs may not always be highly motivated workers, and vice versa. However, it is impossible to completely rule out the possibility that factors like job design, empowerment, training, performance reviews, incentives, and flexible work schedules all have some bearing on how happy employees are and how motivated they are to work. Furthermore, the research indicates that there is no ignoring the correlation between motivation and job satisfaction and that successful organisations recognise the importance of both factors in enabling their workforce to achieve their goals, which in turn drives organisational success. Finally, from the study undertaken by Kuranchie-Mensah, and Amponsah-Tawiah (2016), it was found that employees are motivated by both intrinsic and extrinsic factors with particular emphasis on pay or remuneration and that attractive remuneration was identified as the best motivating factor for employees at the sample organisations.

## SUMMARY

Motivation and productivity are very important concepts that every organisation that is in business is working to balance so that its performance can be set apart from the other competitor organisations. This paper has shown that there is a link between motivation and productivity and that there is very limited literature on Zambia that deals with this field of study. The paper has also covered the various theories that show that motivation has an impact on organisational productivity and therefore a lot of stakeholders will get a deeper understanding of this topic, which is crucial for the expansion of organisations but now lacks enough research and useful input. The fundamental subject of employee motivation and employee productivity has been partly addressed through this research study, however, there is a need to carry out empirical studies to test the relationship between motivation and productivity. Finally, the study will help fill in the knowledge gap that the country has regarding issues related to employee productivity and employee motivation and will greatly benefit the world of academia and the corporate world at large.

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