

Types and Theories of Motivation

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Motivation psychologists usually attempt to show how motivation varies within a person at different times or among different people at the same time. The purpose of the psychology of motivation is to explain how and why that happens. Broad views of how to understand motivation were created by psychologists based on various types of analyses. Cognitive analyses, behavioral anticipation, and affective devices are often used to account for motivation in terms of expecting an end-state or goal.

Motivation psychology is a study of how biological, psychological, and environmental variables contribute to motivation. That is, what do the body and brain contribute to motivation; what mental processes contribute; and finally, how material incentives, goals, and their mental representations motivate individuals.

Psychologists research motivation through the use of two different methods. Experimental research is usually conducted in a laboratory and involves manipulating a motivational variable to determine its effects on behavior.

While a goal guides a behavior that results in achieving it, an incentive is an anticipated feature of the environment that pulls an individual toward or away from a goal. Incentives usually enhance motivation for goal achievement. Emotions act like motives as well. They motivate an individual in a coordinated fashion along multiple channels of affect, physiology, and behavior to adapt to significant environmental changes.

4 Different Types of Motivation

The self-concordance model of goal setting differentiates between four types of motivation (Sheldon & Elliot, 1999).

1. External motivation

Goals are heavily guided by external circumstances and would not take place without some kind of reward or to prevent a negative outcome.

For example, an individual who clocks extra hours in their day job purely to receive a bigger paycheck.

2. Introjected motivation

Goals are characterized by self-image or ego-based motivation, reflecting the need to keep a certain self-image alive. For example, our worker in the example above staying longer in the office so that they are perceived as a 'hard worker' by their manager and co-workers.

3. Identified motivation

The actions needed to accomplish the goal are perceived as personally important and meaningful, and personal values are the main drivers of goal pursuit. For example, the worker putting in extra hours because their personal values align with the objective of the project they are working on.

4. Intrinsic motivation

When a behavior is guided by intrinsic motivation, the individual strives for this goal because of the enjoyment or stimulation that this goal provides. While there may be many good

reasons for pursuing the goal, the primary reason is simply the interest in the experience of goal pursuit itself. For example, the worker spends more time at their job because they enjoy and are energized by using their skills in creativity and problem-solving.

Goals guided by either identified or intrinsic motivation can be considered self-concordant. A self-concordant goal is personally valued, or the process towards the goal is enjoyable and aligns with interests. Self-concordant goals are associated with higher levels of wellbeing, enhanced positive mood, and higher levels of life satisfaction compared to non-self-concordant goals.

Theories of Motivation

Theories of Motivation includes Maslow's theory of the hierarchy of needs, Alderfer's ERG theory, McClelland's achievement motivation theory, and Herzberg's two-factor theory focused on what motivates people and addressed specific factors like individual needs and goals.

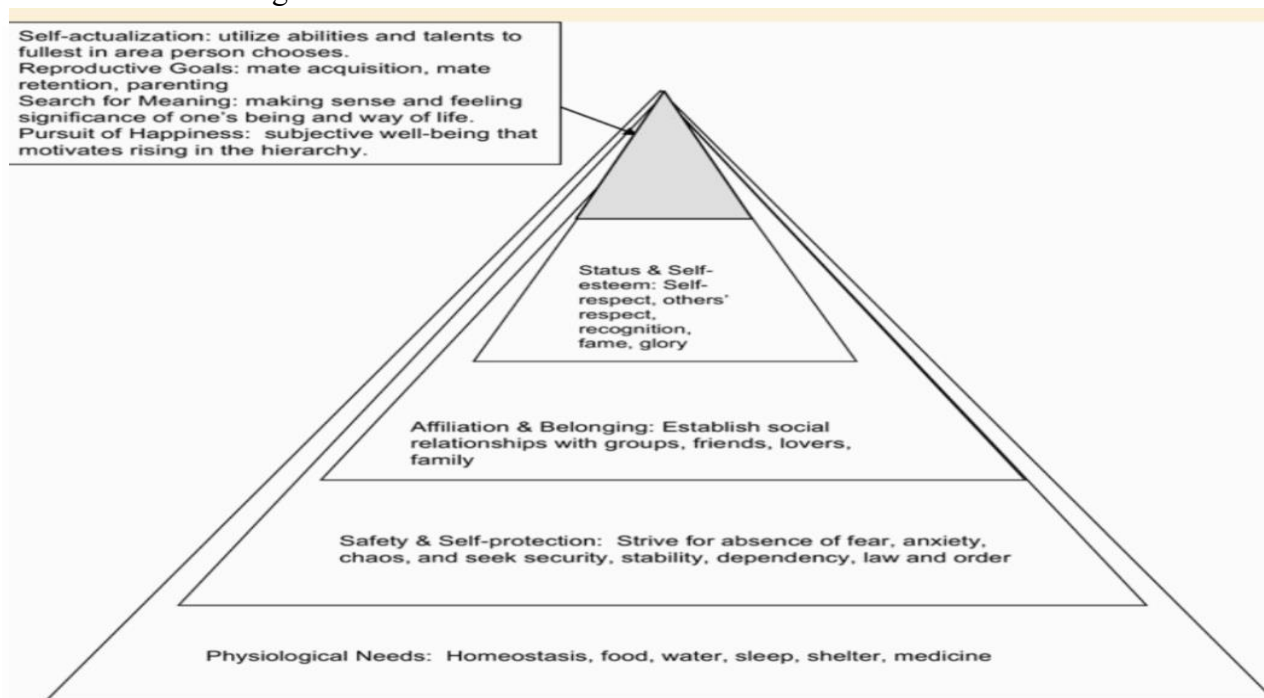
Maslow's theory of the hierarchy of needs

The most recognized content theory of motivation is that of Abraham Maslow, who explained motivation through the satisfaction of needs arranged in a hierarchical order. As satisfied needs do not motivate, it is the dissatisfaction that moves us in the direction of fulfilment. Needs are conditions within the individual that are essential and necessary for the maintenance of life and the nurturance of growth and well-being. Hunger and thirst exemplify two biological needs that arise from the body's requirement for food and water. These are required nutriment for the maintenance of life. Competence and belongingness exemplify two psychological needs that arise from the self's requirement for environmental mastery and warm interpersonal relationships. These are required nutriment for growth and well-being.

Needs serve the organism, and they do so by:

- generating wants, desires, and strivings that motivate whatever behaviors are necessary for the maintenance of life and the promotion of growth and well-being, and
- generating a deep sense of need satisfaction from doing so.

Maslow's legacy is the order of needs progressing in the ever-increasing complexity, starting with basic physiological and psychological needs and ending with the need for self-actualization. While basic needs are experienced as a sense of deficiency, the higher needs are experienced more in terms of the need for growth and fulfilment.



Alderfer's ERG theory

Alderfer's theory of motivation expands on the work of Maslow and takes the premise of need categories a bit further. He observes that when lower needs are satisfied, they occupy less of our attention, but the higher needs tend to become more important, the more we pursue them. He also observed a phenomenon that he called the frustration-regression process where when our higher needs are thwarted, we may regress to lower needs. This is especially important when it comes to motivating employees.

When a sense of autonomy or the need for mastery is compromised, say because of the structure of the work environment, the employee may focus more on the sense of security or relatedness the job provides.

McClelland's achievement motivation theory

McClelland took a different approach to conceptualize needs and argued that needs are developed and learned, and focused his research away from satisfaction. He was also adamant that only one dominant motive can be present in our behavior at a time. McClelland categorized the needs or motives into achievement, affiliation, and power and saw them as being influenced by either internal drivers or extrinsic factors.

The drive for achievement arises out of the psychological need for competence and is defined as a striving for excellence against a standard that can originate from three sources of competition: the task itself, the competition with the self, and the competition against others. High need for achievement can come from one's social environment and socialization influences, like parents who promote and value pursuit and standards of excellence, but it can also be developed throughout life as a need for personal growth towards complexity (Reeve, 2014)

Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory

Herzberg's two-factor theory, also known as motivation-hygiene theory, was originally intended to address employee motivation and recognized two sources of job satisfaction. He argued that motivating factors influence job satisfaction because they are based on an individual's need for personal growth: achievement, recognition, work itself, responsibility, and advancement.

On the other hand, hygiene factors, which represented deficiency needs, defined the job context and could make individuals unhappy with their job: company policy and administration, supervision, salary, interpersonal relationships, and working conditions.

Process Theories of Motivation

Process theories like Skinner's reinforcement theory, Victor Vroom's expectancy theory, Adams' equity theory, and Locke's goal-setting theory set out to explain how motivation occurs and how our motives change over time.

Reinforcement theory

The most well-known process theory of motivation is the reinforcement theory, which focused on the consequences of human behavior as a motivating factor.

Based on Skinner's operant conditioning theory, it identifies positive reinforcements as promoters that increased the possibility of the desired behavior's repetition: praise, appreciation, a good grade, trophy, money, promotion, or any other reward (Gordon, 1987).

It distinguished positive reinforcements from negative reinforcement and punishment, where the former gives a person only what they need in exchange for desired behavior, and the latter tries to stop the undesired behavior by inflicting unwanted consequences.

See our articles on Positive Reinforcement in the Workplace and Parenting Children with Positive Reinforcement.

Other process motivation theories combine aspects of reinforcement theory with other theories, sometimes from adjacent fields, to shine a light on what drives human behavior.

Adams' equity theory of motivation

For example, Adams' equity theory of motivation (1965), based on Social Exchange theory, states that we are motivated when treated equitably, and we receive what we consider fair for our efforts. It suggests that we not only compare our contributions to the amount of rewards we receive but also compare them to what others receive for the same amount of input. Although equity is essential to motivation, it does not take into account the differences in individual needs, values, and personalities, which influence our perception of inequity.

Vroom's expectancy theory

Victor Vroom's expectancy theory (1964), on the other hand, integrates needs, equity, and reinforcement theories to explain how we choose from alternative forms of voluntary behavior based on the belief that decisions will have desired outcomes. Vroom suggests that we are motivated to pursue an activity by appraising three factors:

- Expectancy that assumes more effort will result in success
- Instrumentality that sees a connection between activity and goal
- Valence which represents the degree to which we value the reward or the results of success.

Locke's goal-setting theory

Finally, Locke and Latham's (1990) goal-setting theory, an integrative model of motivation, sees goals as key determinants of behavior. Possibly the most widely applied, the goal-setting theory stresses goal specificity, difficulty, and acceptance and provides guidelines for how to incorporate them into incentive programs and management by objectives (MBO) techniques in many areas.

Lock's recipe for effective goal setting includes:

- Setting of challenging but attainable goals. Too easy or too difficult or unrealistic goals don't motivate us.
- Setting goals that are specific and measurable. These can focus us toward what we want and can help us measure the progress toward the goal.
- Goal commitment should be obtained. If we don't commit to the goals, then we will not put adequate effort toward reaching them, regardless of how specific or challenging they are.
- Strategies to achieve this could include participation in the goal-setting process, the use of extrinsic rewards (bonuses), and encouraging intrinsic motivation through providing feedback about goal attainment. It is important to mention here that pressure to achieve goals is not useful because it can result in dishonesty and superficial performance.
- Support elements should be provided. For example, encouragement, needed materials and resources, and moral support.
- Knowledge of results is essential. Goals need to be quantifiable, and there needs to be feedback.

Cognitive Theories of Motivation

Some cognitive theories inform our understanding of motivation.

They address specific cognitive phenomena that can influence motivation, represent a particular factor of motivation, describe a form of expression of motivation, or explain a process through which it can occur or be enhanced. The list of cognitive phenomena is by no means comprehensive, but it does give us a taste of the complexity of human motivation and includes references for those who want to read further into more nuanced topics:

- Plans (Carver, Scheier, & Weintraub, 1998)
- Goals (Locke & Latham, 2002)
- Implementation intentions (Gollwitzer, 1999)
- Deliberative versus implementation mindsets (Gollwitzer & Kinney, 1989)
- Promotion versus prevention orientations (Higgins, 1997)
- Growth versus fixed mindsets (Dweck, 2006)
- Dissonance (Festinger, 1957; Harmon-Jones & Mills, 1999)
- Self-efficacy (Bandura, 1986)
- Perceived control (Skinner, 1996)
- Reactance theory (Brehm, 1966)
- Learned helplessness theory (Miller & Seligman, 1975)
- Mastery beliefs (Diener & Dweck, 1978)
- Attributions (Wiener, 1986)
- Values (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002)
- Self-concept (Markus, 1977)
- Possible selves (Oyserman, Bybee, & Terry, 2006)
- Identity (Eccles, 2009)
- Self-regulation (Zimmerman, 2000)
- Self-control (Baumeister & Tierney, 2011)

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