



CULTURE AND MOTIVATION TO WORK IN NIGERIAN ORGANIZATIONS

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Abstract

In order to survive and for human beings to be effective, Sociologists and Anthropologists believe that humans must learn the skills, acquire knowledge and adapt to ways of behaving in the society into which they are born. It is the intention of this article to examine the issues raised in the traditional motivation to work theories with particular reference to Culture and Motivation to Work in Nigerian Organizations. Our examination and critical review of literature on influence of culture and motivation to work in Nigerian organizations concluded that, the applicability or workability of motivation and management principles is largely dependent on the cultural traditions of the society in which a work organization is located. There is no culture-free context of motivation and management principles.

Keywords: Culture, Motivation, Work, Nigerian, Organizations

Introduction

In order to survive and for human beings to be effective, Sociologists and Anthropologists believe that humans must learn the skills, acquire knowledge and adapt to ways of behaving in the society into which they are born i.e. they must learn a culture. In Kluckholm (1951)'s elegant phrase, culture is a 'design for living' held by members of a particular society. And hence humans are social beings, their behaviours are also based on guidelines that are learned. The appropriateness of all human behaviour, including values, culture and motivational orientations are usually tied to contingencies of time, place, and situation (Fiedler, 1967; Rockeach, 1973; Ojiji, 2015). While motivation is a process that starts with a physiological or psychological deficiency or need that activates behaviour or drive that is aimed at a

goal or incentive. In a systemic sense, motivation is said to consist of three interacting and interdependent elements:

1. Needs: Needs are created whenever there is a physiological or psychological imbalance, which is not always based on a deficiency. For example an individual with a strong need to get ahead may have a history of consistent success.
2. Drives: Drives or motives are set up to alleviate needs. Physiological and psychological drives are action oriented and provide an energizing thrust toward reaching an incentive.
3. Incentives: An incentive is anything that will alleviate a need and reduce a drive. Thus, attaining an incentive will tend to restore physiological or psychological balance and will tend to reduce or cut off the drive.

The aim of this chapter therefore was to attempt a presentation of cultural variables as the major stubborn particular influencing work and work motivation theories in Nigerian organizations. The chapter is divided into four sections. The first section presents an overview of the classification of human motives. The second presents work motivation approaches. The third section concerns with motivation and culture and the fourth section concerns with work motivation in Nigerian organizations. The chapter is therefore presented in the above sequence.

Classification of human motives

Psychologists do not totally agree on how to classify the various human motives, but they would acknowledge the following:

- (i) Some motives are unlearned and physiologically based. These are called physiological, biological, primary or unlearned motives. They include hunger, thirst, sleep, avoidance of pain, sex, and maternal concern.
- (ii) Some motives are unlearned but not physiologically based. These are 'general' or 'stimulus' motives (Rathus, 1990). They include motives of curiosity, manipulation, activity and possibly affection.
- (iii) Some motives are learned. These are 'social' or 'secondary' motives. These motives dominate the study and application of the field of Industrial and Organizational Psychology (Luthans, 2005). Some of the more

important social motives are needs for achievement, affiliation, power, security and status.

- (iv) Some motives are extrinsic, while others are intrinsic. Extrinsic motives are tangible and visible to others. In the work place, extrinsic motivators include pay, benefits and promotions. Extrinsic motivators attract people into the organization and help keep them on the job. Intrinsic motives are internally generated. They include feelings of responsibility, achievement, accomplishment that something is learnt from an experience, feelings of being challenged or competitive, or that something was an engaging task or goal (Manz & Neck, 2004)

Having considered the basic dimensions of the motivation process, we shall now look at the particular work-motivation approaches that are more directly related to the psychology of management of organizations.

Work motivation approaches

The theoretical development of work motivation is usually summarized into three major approaches, viz: Content theories; Process theories; and Derivative procedural/Organizational justice theories.

The content theories go as far back as the turn of the 20th century, when pioneering scientific managers such as Frederick W. Taylor, Frank Gilbreth and Henry L. Gantt proposed sophisticated wage incentive models to motivate workers. It was an attempt to determine what it was that motivates people at work. At first, money was thought to be the only incentive (scientific management). And then a little later it was thought that incentives include working conditions, security, and perhaps a democratic style of supervision (human relations). The content of motivation was deemed to be the so called higher-level needs or motives, such as responsibility, recognition, achievement, esteem and self-actualization (Maslow 1943); advancement (Herzberg); and growth and personal development (Alderfer).

The content theories suggested the importance of meeting certain employee content needs on the job. This would include providing enough financial remuneration so that workers can both meet basic needs and have some sense of security.

Following the content movement were the process theories that based mainly on the cognitive concept of expectancy. The process theories are most closely associated with the work of Victor Vroom, Lyman Porter and Ed Lawler.

More recently equity and the derivative procedural/organizational justice theories have received the most attention in work motivation.

However, we will highlight our discussion on the content theories only.

The content theories of work motivation:

Maslow (1943) identified five levels in his needs hierarchy. Maslow believed that once a given level of need is satisfied, it no longer serves to motivate. And the next level of need has to be activated in order to motivate the individual:

- (1) **Physiological Needs:** Correspond to the unlearned primary needs such as hunger, thirst, sleep and sex. According to the theory, once these basic needs are satisfied, they no longer motivate.
- (2) **Safety Needs:** Are roughly equivalent to the security need. Maslow stressed emotional as well as physical safety. Yet, as is true of the physiological needs, once these safety needs are satisfied, they no longer motivate.
- (3) **Love Needs:** Loosely correspond to the affection and affiliation needs. Critics suggest that a more appropriate word describing this level would be "belongingness" or "social", as the word "love" has many misleading connotations such as sex, which is a physiological need (Luthans, 2005).
- (4) **Esteem Needs:** Represent the higher needs of humans. The needs for power, achievement and status can be considered part of this level. Maslow carefully pointed out that the esteem level contains both self-esteem and esteem from others.
- (5) **Needs for self-actualization:** This level represents the culmination of all the lower, intermediate and higher needs of humans. People who have become self-actualized are self-fulfilled and have realized all their potential. In effect, self-actualization is the person's motivation to transform perception of self into reality.

Maslow did not intend that his needs hierarchy be directly applied to work motivation (Luthans, 2005). Despite this lack of intent, others such as McGregor (1960)

popularized the Maslow theory in management literature. Perhaps the significant contribution of the Maslow theory to work motivation is in terms of making management aware of the diverse needs of employees at work (Baron, 1986). Employees have both "high level" and "basic level" motivation at the work place. Herzberg extended the work of Maslow and developed a specific content theory of work motivation. Herzberg conducted a widely reported motivational study on about 200 accountants and engineers in the mid-1950s and concluded that the features that gave rise to job satisfaction (motivator factors) and job dissatisfaction (hygiene factors) were different. He found that motivators (like opportunities for achievement, recognition, responsibility, advancement and growth) were intrinsic to a particular job, and when they were strengthened, the level of motivation would increase. The hygiene factors were extrinsic to the job, yet included features of organizational context, such as organizational politics, salaries, members' relationships, and supervisory management style. Herzberg (1966) argued that inadequate policies, salaries, and other "hygiene factors" yielded dissatisfaction and adequate policies eliminated dissatisfaction (negativity or whining), but only the motivator factors directly influenced motivation beyond the psychological neutral level (absence of whining). An organizational member's motivational level is influenced by the design of the job (what the person does), and the organizational context pre-disposes the member to be motivated.

Herzberg's two-factor theory provided a new light on the context of work motivation. Up to this point, management had generally concentrated on hygiene factors. When faced with a morale problem, the typical solution was higher pay, more fringe benefits and better working conditions. However, this simplistic solution did not really work.

Herzberg extended Maslow's needs hierarchy concept and made it more applicable to work motivation. Herzberg also drew attention to the importance of job content factors in work motivation, which previously had been badly neglected and often totally overlooked. The job design i. e. technique of job enrichment is also one of Herzberg's contributions. However, like his predecessor, Herzberg fell short of a comprehensive theory of work motivation, his model describes only some of the content of work motivation; it does not adequately describe the complex motivation process of organizational participants.

An additive extension of the Herzberg and the Maslow content theories of work motivation come from the work of Alderfer who identified three groups of core needs: Existence, Relatedness and Growth (ERG). The existence needs are concerned with survival (physiological well-being). The relatedness needs stress the importance of inter-personal and social relationships. The growth needs are concerned with the individual's intrinsic desire for personal development.

Alderfer suggested more of a continuum of needs than hierarchical levels or two factors of prepotency needs. Unlike Maslow and Herzberg, he does not contend that a lower level need must be fulfilled before higher level need becomes motivating or that deprivation is the only way to activate a need. For example, according to ERG theory, the person's background or cultural environment may dictate that the relatedness needs will take precedence over unfulfilled existence needs and that the more the growth needs are satisfied, the more they will increase in intensity. Further, Maslow hierarchy suggested a process called satisfaction-progression in which a person moves up the hierarchy after lower order need is being routinely met. Alderfer's approach adds what may be termed frustration-regression. When higher order growth needs are stifled or cannot be met due to personal circumstances, the lack of ability or some other factor, the individual is inclined to regress back to lower-order needs and feel those needs more strongly. This would occur, for instance when a person cannot move up the corporate ladder and is stuck in a mundane job. According to Alderfer's ERG model, that individual would be expected to then emphasize social relationships both on and off the job and become more enamoured with pay and benefits.

Motivation and culture: A critique

The content theories of motivation discussed above are based almost exclusively upon the findings, thinking and empirical studies from the western world. However, it is an acknowledged fact that-the world is characterized by cultural variations and these cultural differences are critical to providing explanations for variations in motivation to work. Thus, these theories cannot, be invoked with full confidence universally (Adler, 2002)

Durkheim (1974) maintains that society sets limits to what its members can be and do. The conclusion that can be drawn from this submission is that society influences

the worker; the worker in turn also influences the society. The values, attitudes and other behavioural traits which are exhibited at work are largely influenced and determined by society.

The above submission rests on the basic fact that every society develops an array of work ethos or a collective understanding of the nature of work and of man's relationship in the work setting. This ethos provides the basic guidelines for the definition of the rights, duties, obligations, roles and responsibilities of workers as members of specific organizations. It defines the fundamental values, orientation to and perception of work, systems, and channels of interaction for the workers, as well as the belief systems, which embody the internalized values that, in part, propel action when an array of work ethos reaches the level of general acceptability in a society. It tends to become a strong moral and social force, which gives a kind of uniqueness to such a society. Invariably, therefore, workers in a particular society have to be managed along the lines of the pre-existing work ethos in their society. And as such, motivation and management principles and strategies cannot be separated or divorced from the socio-cultural environment (Alo, 1984; Mohr, 1986; Ahiauzu, 1987; and Aluko, 2001)

Most of the cross-cultural researches on motivation have mainly been limited to the content theories (Maslow's hierarchy of needs, Herzberg's two factors, and McClelland's achievement theory). The results of this research indicate that there are definitely variations of these content theories across cultures. For example, because the Chinese stress collective rather than individual needs, it has been suggested that Maslow's hierarchy, from most basic to the highest, should be (1) belongingness(social), (2) physiological, (3) safety, and (4) self actualization to society (Nevis, 1983).

The same changes for Maslow's hierarchy of motivation have been suggested for Herzberg's two factors and McClelland's need for achievement: they should be recast in light of cultural differences. For instance, there is little question that an individual's sense of responsibility and need for achievement may vary by the culture in which the person is reared. For example, in the USA, Canada and Great Britain, the need for achievement seems to be based on two culturally based characteristics: (a) a willingness to accept moderate degrees of risk and (b) a strong concern for performance. In a culture where uncertainty avoidance is a strongly held value, the

first criterion is less likely to apply. As a result, individuals from countries such as Chile and Portugal may contain employees who base their needs for achievement on other criteria and express differing views regarding what is associated with a high (or low) need for achievement (Hofstede, 2001). The same type of modification would be necessary for cultures where needs for performance is neither as strongly nor as consistently held.

At the same time, the frameworks used to prepare the content theories may be more universal. That is, people in all cultures experience need hierarchies (Maslow), encounter factors that prevent dissatisfaction and lead to motivation (Hertzberg), and are associated with a level of achievement motivation (McClelland). It is not that these theories disappear or are not relevant across cultures, but rather that they have differing forms of content that must be incorporated when applying them within various cultures. In other words, all cultures have needs hierarchies, but the ordering of the needs may differ by culture. Further, many needs are relatively pervasive. For example, the need for achievement and the desire for interesting work are two highly motivating factors in many cultures. Thus, although employees in various countries may have differing absolute level of needs, the relative ranks of the needs may be more consistent (Sagie, Elizur & Yamauchi, 1996).

Culture and Motivation to Work in Nigerian Organizations

Nigeria is composed of more than 250 different ethnic groups and sub-ethnic groups. Attempting therefore to discuss motivation in the "Nigerian culture" is a complex matter. However, Nigeria comprising of all the different and numerous ethnic groups have been administered as one unit since 1914 under the same political and economic. It should be logical to assume, therefore that the cultures of the different ethnic groups have converged enough to enable a meaningful discussion of culture and motivation to work in Nigeria:

1. In all Nigerian societies, people have thought in collective rather than individualistic terms (Nnoli, 1980). Thus, the Nigerian Organizational worker sees himself as working for members of his extended family rather than only for his nuclear family as obtains in the western world. The immediate consequence of this trend is that not much is left for the worker to cater for himself (and his nuclear family) after taking care of the extended

family. The motivation and management principle to be adopted in the Nigerian Organizational work setting, therefore, is to take the "Nigerian factor" into cognizance, by paying equitable wages and salaries that will be commensurate with the workers nuclear and extended families.

2. Several empirical studies i. e Aluko (1998, 2001) confirm that money is the primary and main motivating factor among Nigerian workers. Therefore in order to motivate and manage workers in the Nigerian environment efficiently, management must pay very attractive, handsome and equitable wages.
3. In spite of the above arguments, almost all categories of Nigerian Organizational wage earners have lived far below their real requirements as wages cannot meet their basic needs (Mkandawire & Soludo, 1999) It is therefore logical to argue that a worker whose income is grossly inadequate for his needs can hardly be motivated to work efficiently. Rather, such a worker is likely to put in very little effort in the official duties in order to conserve energies for private ventures or practice. Other negative behaviour likely to be exhibited include absenteeism, deliberate slowing down of work speed, unauthorized conversion of official property to personal use, and using official hours to attend to personal affairs (Adedayo, 1994).
4. The Nigerian economy is characterized by job insecurity. Private sector organizations are folding up here and there. Consequently, workers are being laid off in large numbers. In the public sector too, mass retrenchment has been a regular exercise. It is logical to argue that workers whose tenure of office is not secured can hardly be motivated to work. In order to motivate and manage the Nigerian worker, management and employers must ensure that the conditions of work guarantee job security.
5. Paternalistic/benevolent care of employees has been recognized as a significant style of management that motivates workers (Fashoyin, 1980; Ejiolor, 1987). The worker demands paternalistic, care and informal relationship such as sympathetic understanding of his personal problems, humane, relaxed supervision and personal attention in the work place. This perception does not necessarily require monetary or material incentives. Where management recognizes these expectations, the workers can be

readily motivated to work, but if not, the workers' reaction is likely to be negative as they feel disappointed, rejected and misunderstood.

6. In Nigerian work organizations, there is the tradition of paying respect to elders. Thus, age affects authority relationships in work settings. Workers want to be respected for their age, even when those in the management cadre are younger. And so when older workers are placed under the supervision of younger managers, there tends to be a conflict arising from the age factor. The conflict centers on- "if you are my senior at work, I am your senior in age". Therefore motivation and management of workers in Nigeria should take into account the age factor with its extra recognition, respect and authority.
7. The 'average' Nigerian worker does not perceive that advancement depends much on how hard you work, but mostly for being the favourite of the boss (Oloko, 1977, Aluko, 1998). Some workers think that promotion depends on whom you know, how well connected you are, where you come from or even a matter of luck. "God fatherism" is seen as an avenue for promotion. Some take to offering sacrifices to gods and ancestors, wearing success charms, attending spiritual churches, and joining secret societies and clubs.

Management should clearly set out the criteria for promotion in work settings. The criteria must be objective and measurable so as to disabuse the minds of workers who believe in connections, divine intervention or luck.

An important pre-requisite for motivating and managing workers efficiently is fairness (Ejiofor, 1987). Any management principles like favouritism, nepotism, ethnicity, etc and other undue influences negate fairness and must be abandoned if the Nigerian workers are to be adequately motivated to perform.

8. In Nigeria Organizations generally, societal values have shifted from hard work, honesty, good reputation and integrity to accumulating money, wealth and property, thus, generating an unwholesome attitude towards work performance. With this kind of orientation, it is evidently clear that there is a kind of apathy and lack of commitment to work on the part of some Nigerian workers. This type of negative orientation to work needs to be addressed and the workforce re-oriented before they could be motivated to perform

Conclusion

From all indications, submissions and empirical evidence available in literature, the success, the applicability or workability of motivation and management principles is largely dependent on the cultural traditions of the society in which a work organization is located (Sorge, 1983, Ahiauzu, 1986, 1987). There is no culture-free context of motivation and management principles.

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