

# Understanding the Motivating Factors among Future Working Individuals

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## Abstract

This study has investigated the ranked importance of certain motivational factors of senior level undergraduate and MBA students in the School of Business at The Lebanese International University(LIU). To gain information about the rankings of these motivational factors, a self-administered questionnaire addressing nine motivational factors: (1) Job security, (2) Good salary, (3) personal loyalty to employees from your superiors, (4) interesting work, (5) good working conditions, (6) Promotion and growth in the organization, (7) Full appreciation of work done, (8) freedom to plan and execute work independently,(9) A good match between your job requirements and your abilities and experience was designed and hand delivered to 126 participants in the School of Business. Nearly 70% of the students participated in the survey were registered in the MBA program. The findings of the study suggest that good salary and job security are the highest ranked motivational factors. The findings of the study also support the notion that what motivates workers is different given the environment in which they work.

**Keywords:** content theories, dissatisfaction, good salary, individuals, LIU, process theories, satisfaction

## 1. Introduction

It is impossible for a person to be active in his/her work without being motivated to do that work. Capital is a major factor of production. It consists of physical capital and human capital. Investment in human capital is very crucial for the enhancement of productivity. Because of the importance of human capital in productivity, understanding the factors that motivate individuals to do their jobs effectively is very crucial. According to (Mobbs & McFarland, 2010), Motivation in the workplace can be defined as the willingness to exert high levels of effort toward organizational goals conditioned by the effort's ability to satisfy some individual needs. This definition suggests that workers' motivation is crucial for businesses to perform well. Without motivation, workers cannot give their best, resulting in the firm's performance being less effective. A sense of justice is the basis of employee engagement in a job. Motivated employees improve an organization's productivity and its competitive advantage. They are more highly engaged, can better handle the unease that comes with uncertainty, generally make for better problem solvers, and are more innovative, creative, and customer focused. Organizations with highly motivated workforces, in addition to being more profitable, report having higher levels of customer satisfaction and employee retention (Schaufenbue, 2015).

Motivated workers are urgently demanded in our rapidly changing jobs because they are more productive. Motivated workers help businesses survive. To be effective, managers need to understand what motivates workers within the context of the roles they perform (Lindner, 1998).

Fairness or justice in workplace according (Campbell, n. d.) refers to the employee's sense of being treated with respect. It consists of such things as feeling compensated fairly for one's labor, having sufficient job security, and being treated with dignity. Fairness is embodied both in the organization's overall policies and practices, and in manner in which the employee's boss treats him/her.

Satisfaction in a job contributes to increases in productivity and results in lower level of absenteeism and turnover. Early management theories, such as Frederick W. Taylor's Scientific Management Theory advised using financial rewards to increase motivation. In 1914, Henry Ford, the builder of the most popular car in the world at the time took a spectacular decision of paying every qualified worker in his company a minimum of \$5 per day for an eight-hour day. This off course represented a very large salary rise for most workers who used to

earn an average of \$2.30 for a nine-hour day. This great motivational announcement by Ford resulted in stunning results: The annual turnover rate fell from a high of 370% in 1913 to a low of 16% in 1916. Productivity was also noticed as a result of Ford's announcement. Productivities were much higher in 1914 than in 1913. The estimates of Productivity increases vary from 30% to 50 % (Blanchard, Amighini, & Giavazzi, 2010).

The initiative by Henry Ford in 1914 to motivate his workers so that they become more productive was consistent with many of the future motivational theories such as Maslow's Hierarchy Theory, Herzberg's Motivation- Hygiene Theory and Adam's Equity Theory.

Many of the studies on motivation have focused on studying what motivates employees and how they were motivated (Herzberg, 1968; Kovach, 1987; Harpaz, 1990; Lindner, 1998; LU, 1999; Aworemi, Abdul-Azeez, & Durowoju, 2011; Chowdhury, Alam, & Ahmad, 2014; and Rahim, Haque, Ibrahim, & Mamun, 2014). The focus of this paper is to study the motivational factors of senior level undergraduate and MBA students in a private university in Lebanon who will one day become employees in different businesses. Investigating what motivates future working individuals is highly profitable for human resource managements as it might help them plan an environment in the job that takes into consideration the motivational factors of those future working individuals that are highly important to them. Implementing these factors will help in self-development of individuals and the more the individuals are satisfied in their job, the more beneficial and successful is the business.

## **2. Workers' Motivational Theories**

The literature has presented several motivational theories that give some understanding of workers' motivational factors. Although lots of theories have been developed and quite a lot of research have been done, factors that motivate people to accomplish their work well are still debatable. Motivational theories can be divided into two categories: content theories and process theories (Griffin & Moorhead, 2012; Lee & Raschke, 2016).

### *2.1 Content theories*

Content theories deal with what motivates individuals to perform their jobs and they are concerned with individual needs and desires. The content theories consist of Maslow's need Hierarchy theory, Herzberg's motivation Hygiene theory and McClelland's needs theory

#### *2.1.1 Maslow's Hierarchy Theory*

Maslow's Hierarchy theory is given by Abraham Maslow. Maslow theory is the most well-known and often cited motivational theory (Fincham & Rhodes, 2005). Maslow (1958) argues that employees have five levels of needs that could be arranged hierarchically from the lowest level: physiological and safety to the highest level: social, ego, and self-actualizing. Maslow claimed that lower level needs are first satisfied before the next higher level need would motivate employees. Within each level, there are needs that employees would like to satisfy:

- 1) Physiological: water, hunger, the need for protection
- 2) Safety: security, shelter, law
- 3) Social: being a part of group, love
- 4) Ego: self-respect, respect from others, promotion
- 5) Self-actualizing: problem solving, accomplishing, personal growth

Even though Maslow's theory is considered the most well-known and respected motivation theory, some researchers such as Trigg (2004) has highlighted some problems with Maslow's approach because of so much emphasis is put on the personal growth of the individual using the hierarchy of needs.

#### *2.1.2 Herzberg's Motivation- Hygiene Theory or Two-Factor Theory*

Herzberg's motivation- hygiene theory or two-factor theory was developed by (Herzberg, 1968). Herzberg did his theory by interviewing over 200 professionals where he classified job factors into two categories: Motivators or satisfiers and dissatisfiers or hygiene factors. Examples of motivators or satisfiers' factors consists of: achievement, recognition, advancement and growth. These produce satisfaction. Therefore, to create conditions for job satisfaction things to consider by firms include: recognizing people's contributions, creating work that is rewarding and matching people's abilities and skills, and offering training and development opportunities. Examples of dissatisfiers or hygiene factors include: company policy, salary, security and work conditions. According to Herzberg, in order to get rid of the causes of job dissatisfaction, a firm needs to consider the following: ensuring that wages are competitive, providing job security, creating a culture of respect and dignity for all team members. Herzberg reasoned that the opposite of satisfaction is no satisfaction and the opposite of dissatisfaction is no dissatisfaction. The interest in this theory has reached its peak during the 1970s and early

1980s according to (Ambrose & Kuilk, 1999).

### 2.1.3 McClelland's Need's Theory

McClelland's need's theory focused on three motivational needs (Miner, 2006), These being the need for power, the need for achievement and the need for affiliation. The need for power is motivated by authority. The people with high power needs usually search for high-level positions. The need for achievement is characterized by the behavior toward competition. A person with a high need for achievement attains the task that is intrinsically satisfying and is not necessarily complemented by the material rewards. The need for affiliation motivates a person because of his/her need for social relationships and social interaction. High affiliated persons try to be away from conflict and usually desire to resolve problems through confirmative and cooperative approaches. They also enjoy the sense of intimacy and have the desire to help and console others during the time of stress and anxiety. Bigley, Porter, and Steers (1996), think that McClelland's belief of acquired needs initiates some attention as some researchers believe that such needs might not always be adjusted.

## 2.2 Process Theories

Process theories deal with how the motivation exists. They try to explain how and why an individual's behavior is directed toward certain choices. According to (Fincham & Rhodes, 2005), all process theories' main concern is focused on the role of an individual's cognitive processes in determining his or her level of motivation. The two most important theories included in the process theories are: Vroom's Expectancy theory and the Equity theory.

### 2.2.1 Vroom's Expectancy Theory

Vroom's expectancy theory was coined by (Vroom, 1964). It is often referred as the VIE theory because it explains the worker motivation in terms of three factors: valence, instrumentality and expectancy. According to his theory, the worker effort will lead to performance and performance will lead to rewards. Rewards can be positive and negative. The worker will be highly motivated when the reward is positive and when the reward is negative, the worker will be less likely motivated. According to (Ambrose & Kulik, 1999) empirical research on Vroom's expectancy theory has declined considerably in the 1990's after it experienced a substantial interest in the 1960's.

### 2.2.2 Adam's Equity Theory

Adams equity theory was coined by (John Stacy Adams (1963). The main goal of the theory is to guarantee a fair balance between a worker's inputs and output in a workplace. A worker's Inputs normally consists of: personal sacrifices, hard work, effort, enthusiasm, commitment, flexibility and the like. A worker's output normally consists of: job security, sense of advancement, recognition, praise, salary and so on. Workers will be de-motivated toward their job and their employer if they feel as though their inputs are greater than the outputs they expect to gain. That is, they are not getting what they deserve. De-motivation will also take place when a worker feels that other workers in the same firm are getting better rewards for their efforts even though he/she is putting similar inputs in the job. The validity of this theory remains very relevant today even though its popularity has fluctuated in the 1960s (Ambrose & Kulik, 1999).

### 2.2.3 The Role of Motivation in the Workforce

The concept of motivation has been researched very frequently and businesses put a big focus on motivated employees because of their positive effect on the productivity of the business. Employee motivation is therefore a crucial factor in the productivity and success of a company. It is important to see that the actions of employees in the workplace will directly determine the rate of output. The collective impact of the workers' levels of motivation will tend to have a great impact of how efficient a business is. If workers are paid well, and often told how important and useful they are to the company, then practices such as arriving late or leaving early, working lazily, taking lengthy breaks that lessen the productivity of the company are more likely to be vanished.

Having a corporate culture that supports and fosters motivated and engaged workers can maintain and keep skilled workers and results in a decrease in turnover rates. This in turn will decrease the expenses of hiring and training leading to an increase in profits. Through their attitudes towards their employees, companies can develop reputations as good or bad places to work. Companies that create a good working environment, will be able to have loyal workers and stable and productive work environment.

Therefore, to build a friendly relationship with employees that make them more satisfied, it is important that firms initiate certain things that help to motivate employees:

- 1) Monetary and nonmonetary incentives,
- 2) Advancement opportunities for employees

- 3) Disincentives for unproductive workers.
- 4) Keeping the lines of communication always open with employees
- 5) Not holding back on training
- 6) Opening a constructive criticism
- 7) Always supporting open debate

### **3. Methodology**

Here in this study we seek to describe the ranked importance of the following nine motivating factors at work by students who will join the workforce immediately after graduation: (1) Job security, (2) Good salary, (3) personal loyalty to employees from your superiors, (4) interesting work, (5) good working conditions, (6) Promotion and growth in the organization, (7) Full appreciation of work done, (8) freedom to plan and execute work independently, (9) A good match between your job requirements and your abilities and experience. The decision to investigate these factors comes from previous research done on that topic (Kovach's, 1987, Harpaz, 1990, Kinnear & Sutherland, 2000). The research did not differentiate between the levels of experience workers have. The target population of the study included students from the School of Business at the Lebanese International University (LIU), Saida Branch. LIU is located in Lebanon. The sample size included 126 students of the target population. The sample population consisted of 67 female (53%) and 59 male (47%). Nearly 70% of the students participated in the survey were registered in the MBA (Master of Business Administration) program. The rest of the students were senior level undergraduate students. To collect data for the study a written questionnaire was developed. Data was collected through the use of this self-administered questionnaire hand delivered to participants. The questionnaire asked respondents to rank the importance of those nine factors that will motivate them in doing their work: 1= most important. 9= least important.

### **4. Results and Discussion**

The ranked order of the motivating factors according to the questionnaire results were: (1) Good salary, (2) Job security, (3) A good match between your job requirements and your experience and abilities, (4) Promotion, (5) Full appreciation of work done, (6) Interesting work, (7) Personal loyalty to employees from your superiors, (8) Good working conditions, and (9) Freedom to plan and execute jobs.

The survey results showed that a good salary is the most important motivating factor. This is very obvious in any environment that is experiencing low macroeconomic indicators. Getting a good salary becomes people's number one priority. Lebanon is economically going through tough times that can be seen from heightened social instability and tight financial conditions. According to the previous Lebanese Labor Minister, Mohammad Kabbarra, the overall unemployment rate in Lebanon stood at about 25% with unemployment rate among those under 25 at 37%. This bleak economic indicator explains why gaining a good salary has received the highest ranking among students who are one day will join the labor market. It is also expected that a good salary will receive the highest ranking by individuals in countries that experience poor economic growth. (Chowdhury, Alam & Ahmad, 2014; Rahim Uddin, Haque, Ibrahim, & Mamun, 2014) have conducted different studies to identify the motivational factors for non-teaching staff of a public university in Bangladesh and regular and part-time employees in Bangladesh consecutively. They found that good salary has gained the highest ranking by respondents participated in their studies.

Our study shows that besides good salary which is a physiological factor that was ranked number one in the motivating factors list, the study also shows that job security which is a safety factor is ranked number two in the ranking list. The number three ranked motivator, a good match between your job requirements and your experience and abilities is a self-actualizing factor. Comparing these results to Maslow's hierarchy theory, we see that these results are confirmed by his theory. According to Maslow's hierarchy theory, the lower level needs (physiological needs, safety needs) must first be satisfied before the next higher level needs (social, ego and self-actualizing). Therefore, according to Maslow (1958) if managers want to address the most important motivating factors, then Good salary, job security and a good match between your job requirements and your experience and abilities must first be satisfied. Good salary can be satisfied by increased pay.

The following example compares the first highest ranked motivating factor (Good salary) to Adams's equity theory. Say that when a future working individual becomes an employee in a certain firm, and feels that his inputs in that firm are greater than the outputs he deserves to receive then a prejudice feeling may take place and the employee will be de-motivated. In addition, if he feels that other employees in the firm are getting better pay than his pay even though he is putting similar inputs in the firm then inequity feeling takes place and the employee will be de-motivated

The following example compares the fourth highest ranked motivating factor (promotion) to Vroom's expectancy theory. Consider the case when a future working individual's hard work and great efforts he/she is putting to bring more qualified students to register in a private high school in which he/she became the head of its recruitment department, are successful then it is expected that his/her high performance will be resulted in him/her getting high promotion from the administration of the school. Gaining a reward from his/her administration because of his/her high performance will make him/her more motivated and more loyal to his/her job.

An example will compare the three highest ranked factors to Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory. The first two highest factors, good salary and job security are hygiene factors while the third highest ranked factor, a good match between your job requirements and your experience and abilities is a motivator factor. According to Herzberg's theory, the existence of hygiene factors will lead to the absence of dissatisfaction, or no dissatisfaction while the absence of the hygiene factors will lead to dissatisfaction. Furthermore, the existence of motivator factors will lead to satisfaction, while the absence of motivator factors will lead to no satisfaction. Therefore, paying a future working individual lower wage than what he/she believes to be just or fair or paying him/her no unemployment benefits when he/she is laid off from his/her job may lead to job dissatisfaction. Further, the lack of a good match between one's job requirement and his/her experience and abilities will not lead to job dissatisfaction but to no satisfaction. An employee will be motivated when he/she is enjoying a good match between his/her job requirement and his/her abilities and experience, even though he/she is not getting a fair pay or a decent job security. On the other hand, an employee will not necessarily be motivated when he/she is getting a fair or high pay and a decent job security.

Comparing the results of our study with other related studies shed some light into the importance of individual motivational factors. A study by Harpaz (1990) revealed that interesting work was the preeminent work goal identified among all participating countries in his study: Belgium, Britain, Japan, Netherlands, Germany and U.S.A. Another study of industrial workers in the U.S.A done by Kovach (1987) showed that interesting work was the highest ranked motivational factor according to the questionnaire given to industrial workers in 1981 and again in 1986. However, Kovach (1987) survey of industrial workers in 1946 ranked interesting work the sixth among the motivating factors. This discrepancy in the rankings was due to the fact that in 1946, America had come out of a great depression and gone through a war, however, in the 1980s, after many decades of relative prosperity and an increase in wellbeing, it was expected that what workers wanted had changed.

In our study good salary was ranked as the most important motivational factor. This is obvious because of the socio-economic standing of the country. (Chowdhury, Zahurul, & Ahmad, 2014) found that good salary was number one ranked factor in their study. This shows that when a country's economy is performing poorly as it is the case in Lebanon and Bangladesh, workers or future working individuals' main concern would be to gain a fair and decent pay. However, when a country is enjoying a prosperous economy, as it is the case in the countries studied in Kovach's (1987) and Harpaz's (1990) researches, workers will look beyond a salary to a work that is more interesting. Therefore, the discrepancies in these studies' findings support the notion that what motivates workers or future working individuals differs given the environment in which the worker works.

## 5. Conclusion and Implications

This study has investigated the ranked importance of motivational factors of senior undergraduate and graduate business students at the Lebanese International University. Many motivational theories have been investigated. The strategy for motivating future working individuals is dependent on which motivational theory is implemented. If Herzberg theory is used, then businesses should start by concentrating on the hygiene factors such as good pay and work conditions before concentrating on the motivator factors such as recognizing people's contributions and advancement. This is because if hygiene factors are not considered first then dissatisfaction will take place among workers. Therefore, the role of hygiene factors is to prevent workers' discontent. Once there is no dissatisfaction among workers then the motivational factors will truly boost workers to work harder and enjoy their work. If Vroom's expectancy theory is implemented, then businesses should concentrate first on rewarding workers who devote a great deal of efforts in their jobs. Rewarding workers can take many ways such as paying higher wages, creating work that is rewarding and matching people's skills, and offering training opportunities. If Adam's equity theory is implemented then business should make sure that paying a fair and decent wages is taken care before focusing on any motivational factor such as making the environment of the work more interesting for employees.

Regardless of which motivational theory is implemented, good salary and job security seem to be important motivational factors for business senior undergraduate and MBA graduate Lebanese international students who

will one day become members in the workforce. Choices such as fair pay, providing perks such as free meals and casual dress, not keeping score, that is, it is not important to keep track of all the good and bad things that workers have produced in their workplace, allowing flexibility in the workplace and monetary and nonmonetary compensations such as stipend and raise in wages to workers for accepting certain responsibilities in the job should be given good consideration.

The results concluded in this paper have implications for the whole business sector. The efficiency and productivity of businesses are dependent on the motivation of their workers. This implies that workers should let businesses know what motivates them, and businesses should initiate reward systems that play a major role in motivating their workers. To gain important and updated information about the factors that motivate their workers, businesses should consider conducting survey studies periodically.

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