MOTIVATION OF HUMAN RESOURCES: PERCEPTIONS AND TRENDS

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this article is to bring more clarity to the concept of motivation. The first part of the article provides several definitions of motivation, highlighting that the authors studying the field have not yet reached a consensus regarding this aspect. In the second part, a brief overview of literature is carried out. In this regard, the most important theories of motivation identified by contemporary authors as well as few types of motivation grouped according to certain criteria are described in detail. The contribution of this paper stems from revealing important elements related to the current state of knowledge in the field of human resources motivation.

KEYWORDS: *achievement, motivation, needs, satisfaction.*

1. INTRODUCTION

In the 1950s, with economic development, motivation has gained an increasingly important place in research, while several theoretical and empirical studies on this comprehensive field have appeared (Păceşilă, 2016). Thus, models responding to the need to understand the complexity of the motivation phenomenon as well as its dynamics were built. The years 1970-1980 are distinguished by the classification of motivation theories, according to the thematic criterion. Therefore, the content and the process theories appear in literature, the former highlighting the needs affecting the individuals' motivation while the latter focusing on the behavior analysis and motivators influencing it (Zlate, 2007).

The literature has not yet reached a common point concerning the definition of motivation, partly due to the continuous development of the psychology study, partly due to the wide coverage of the term, with a multitude of meanings (Păceşilă 2014a; Păceşilă, 2020).

According to Atkinson (1964), motivation is a combination between the assimilated information and the subjective perception of a situation, which is joined by other important factors, these three elements influencing the individuals' behaviors. Moreover, Nuttin (1985) considers that motivation leads to a certain behavior of individuals, to the detriment of another. Furthermore, Zlate (2007) defines motivation as a state of the body directing behavior towards its satisfaction and elimination. Meyer et al. (2004) understand motivation as a force energizing individuals and determining them to perform in a certain way (Nouri and Mousavi, 2020). In addition, this force has effects on behavior as regards the direction, intensity and duration (Brişcariu, 2019). In other authors' opinion (Zlate, 2006; Gable and Harmon-Jones, 2010), motivation will always determine individuals to do something, to take decisions.

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2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theories of motivation

The three theories of needs or content focus on certain physical or psychological elements that should be met by an individual in order to survive and feel fulfilled. These theories show when a person want to perform, but do not explain the action that should be chosen to meet a need and do not take into account the differences between people.

The first of the content theory, the theory of the hierarchy of needs is a theory of human needs, hierarchized according to the urgency of their fulfillment. The basic level is represented by physiological needs, food, water, oxygen, etc. Once satisfied, the remaining ones dominate each other to be satisfied: security needs (order, familiarity, balance), belonging needs (affection received and offered), respect and esteem needs (on the one hand, self-confidence, on the other hand, respect and appreciation of others), and at the last level of the hierarchy, the need to update oneself (refers to reaching the personal potential to which the individual shows a natural predilection, to the individual's need to live in accordance with the authentic self) (Maslow, 1943; Maslow, 2007).

Later, Maslow organizes the needs into two categories: deficiency needs, comprising the first four levels previously proposed (physiological, security, belonging and respect needs, and finally esteem needs), which should be met before the individual could go to the second category; developmental needs including four levels, arranged hierarchically as follows: cognitive needs, aesthetic needs, needs to update oneself and needs of transcendence. The latter two lead to spiritual fulfillment and self-transcendence while searching for connection with a higher entity, but the purpose of each individual will determine the path to its satisfaction.

This theory has been intensely criticized in the literature due to its limited empirical applicability. Alderfer's theory (1969) stems from the shortcomings of Maslow's theory, namely that some individuals do not feel and do not want to meet some of the needs included in the pyramid model because individuals are different and have different interests which automatically determine a predilection for fulfilling a category of needs, to the detriment of others. The author mentioned above also demonstrates that needs do not necessarily dominate each other. Therefore, it is not necessary to satisfy a lower need in order to allow the emergence of another need of higher rank, as they can have a simultaneous character.

Neher (1991) emphasizes the important role of this theory, but also criticizes four aspects: first, higher needs require the environment support in order to develop; secondly, it is not clear whether meeting the lower needs reduces their urgency; thirdly, higher needs can be considered needs of deficiency; finally, meeting higher needs will not eliminate their status as motivators.

The second theory, the E.R.G., reorganizes Maslow's five needs into three categories of fundamental human needs which are not in a struggle for hierarchical supremacy: existential, relational, and developmental. To meet the needs of existence, people compete with each other; relational needs involve interpersonal acceptance and understanding, which are met for all participants, compared to the previous ones; developmental needs can be met only by using his/her qualities as well as by acquiring new ones when searching for the optimal self. The theory deals with two important concepts: progression, assuming that after satisfying a lower level need, the individual wants to satisfy a higher level need and the latter; regression, in opposition to the former, assuming that an individual not able to satisfy a higher level need will seek to satisfy a lower level need) (Alderfer, 1969).

According to the last theory included in this category, the theory of the need to achieve, an individual satisfies his own needs throughout life due to his experiences, such as the need to achieve, to demonstrate the abilities and to be successful, the need for affiliation, for creating close and meaningful relationships with others and the need for power showing that a person wants to influence and control others. More important, people are not either motivated or unmotivated, but

are motivated differently, depending on the needs they feel are most relevant. Attention is also drawn to the behavior driven by the need for achievement that will be influenced by the environment and will require support throughout the process (McClelland, 1980). In other authors' opinion (Osemeke and Adegboyega, 2017), according to McClelland theory, people are motivated by all three needs mentioned above to varying degrees. Moreover, Robbins et al. (2009) consider that the theory does not have the same applicability as others, as these needs are subconscious, and individuals are not aware of this.

Chronologically, the first process theory was the theory of equity, developed by John Stacey Adams (1965). It is based on the two elements of the exchange relationship between two individuals: inputs - what a person brings in an exchange, and outputs - what the person gets from the exchange. The inequity occurs when the two elements are out of balance, when the input provided by one person differs from the input of the other person while the output is different as well. On the other hand, the equity occurs when both the inputs and the outputs are equal or when the outputs are proportional to the inputs.

Adams (1965) demonstrates the effects of inequity while providing the ways of reducing it: the person will change the inputs depending on advantages and disadvantages caused by inequity; the person will change the outputs in the same way as in the previous case; the person will cognitively change his/her own or others' inputs and outcomes; the person will leave the field if the inequity is very high; the person will try to cause changes in others; the person will change the term of comparison used (Păceşilă, 2014b).

Huseman et al. (1987) provide a new perspective on these theories, focusing on the sensitivity to equity. According to the last one, the individuals express the reaction towards the balance between outcomes and inputs; individuality influences the relationship between subjects' perceptions on equity and organizational outcomes. The authors mentioned above also state that sensitivity to equity is a human trait.

Shortly afterwards, Victor Vroom (1964) presented the theory of expectation, based on the relationship between action and results. The theory is based on three elements that underlie motivation: expectation - the individuals consider that their own efforts will lead to performance; instrumentality – the perception regarding the transformation of performance into results; valence - the desirability of the possible outcome which could provide some satisfaction. However, according to Parijat and Bagga (2014), Vroom's theory includes too many variables which complicates the process of its practical validation. This happens mostly because the employees do not have the necessary time and other optimal resources for the correct calculation of the motivation scores according to the proposed formula.

Another theory that has proven its viability is the theory of goal setting studying the way in which the objectives set motivate the individual and increase his performance. It depends on two of the objectives' attributes: the content, which involves formulating SMART objectives and setting their degree of difficulty (an objective that is not too easy will not have the role of motivator, because it does not represent a challenge for the individual); intensity, which refers to the intensity of the objectives' achievement, by making a commitment and making the necessary effort (Locke, 1967, 1968).

An important concept is that of self-regulation that occurs after setting the objectives (Latham and Locke, 1991). In practice, according to Lunenburg (2011), these objectives should meet the following characteristics: to be specific, difficult, but still achievable, to be accepted by the individual for whom they are created and to provide feedback regarding their fulfillment. Moreover, setting deadlines helps to achieve the objectives while setting group objectives is just as important as setting individual objectives.

Apart from these categories, other authors stand out in the deepening of the field of motivation. McGregor (1966) considered that employee motivation often depends on the managers' style: those included in Theory X have an authoritarian style and the need to always control while the

employees are not motivated. Managers included in Theory Y stimulate personal development and give autonomy to employees who feel more motivated. Moreover, according to Theory X, people are lazy, eager to be led, resistant to change and focused on their own interests and not those of the organization. The behavior of the individual is, however, a product of the organization, not of human nature while the dissatisfaction has a direct impact on his behavior. According to Theory Y, the human factor is neither passive nor resistant to change, but these attitudes derive from his experience in the organization. While Theory X is based entirely on external control, Theory Y brings to light the concepts of self-control and self-direction of efforts, allowing meeting the individuals' needs.

As regards Theory X, in Gannon and Boguszak (2013) opinion, people do not behave in a certain way due to their nature, but to the nature of the organization. Moreover, according to the authors mentioned above and in line to Theory Y, the responsibilities of managers are removed. Another criticism refers to the applicability of Theory Y, as each of the two approaches is better suited to a particular type of organization.

Furthermore, Hofstede argues that Theory Y has no universal applicability while Theory X is more relevant for countries with great power distances and a high index of uncertainty avoidance (Sorensen and Minihan, 2011).

Another prominent name, Frederick Herzberg, developed the theory of dual factors in 1959. According to this author, people have two types of needs: the first type is represented by the hygiene factors (control, physical and relational conditions where work is carried out, institutional policies), which can cause dissatisfaction while the second is represented by motivators (recognition as well as work and tasks required by it, achievements, responsibility, opportunities for advancement), which could lead to satisfaction, motivation to perform (Herzberg, 1959; 2003). The position held by the employee could not intensify the motivation and, implicitly, could not satisfy the individual if the changes occur only for hygienic factors because the work itself should contain intrinsic motivators (Vagu and Stegăroiu, 2007). However, hygiene factors often intertwine with motivators because they are not two distinct elements (Malik and Naeem, 2013). This idea is supported by a study conducted in the UK leading to a mistrust of the two types of factors and the applicability of Herzberg's theory (Shipley and Kiely, 1988).

The most recent approach, the theory of self-determination, focused on the human desire for development and the innate psychological needs that underlie it: need for autonomy (will, freedom to choose), need for competence (to feel useful and have an impact on the environment) and need for relationships (belonging, interaction). The theory identifies several types of motivation: amotivation, or lack of motivation to achieve a goal, intrinsic motivation, or the individual's desire to get involved in an activity, and extrinsic motivation, in opposition to intrinsic motivation because the individual get involved in a activity only to achieve another goal (Deci et al., 1994).

Ryan and Deci (2000a; 2008) distinguish four types of extrinsic motivation: *external regulation* involving the lowest autonomy; *introjection* which is achieved through incentives; *identification* involving greater autonomy; *integrated regulation* involving behaviors' assimilation by the individual. The study of the theory mentioned above showed a decline in motivation with aging and increasing the time spent in a particular position. It was also observed that individuals in leadership positions are less motivated than others, but autonomous motivation could be noticed in both cases (Guo, 2007).

2.2 Types of motivation
The literature distinguishes between several types of motivation grouped according to certain criteria (Nicolescu and Verboncu, 2001; Zlate, 2007; Vagu and Stegăroiu, 2007):

● *Positive and negative motivation*. Positive motivation aims to increase the employees' performance through salary increases, awarding bonuses, hierarchical promotion and/ or verbal appreciation, etc. At the opposite pole, the negative motivation seeks to increase the performance of

human resources through salary reductions, demotion and/or verbal reprimands. The effects of this type of motivation include employee dissatisfaction, but also an unfavorable organizational climate.

● *Economic motivation and moral-spiritual motivation.* The former involves financial incentives, one of the main reasons people work: bonuses, premiums and other non-monetary benefits (health insurance, car service, meal vouchers, private pensions), but also penalties or financial charges, in case of events that cause losses to the organization. In fact, according to Zlate (2007), a compensation system will never be satisfactory for all beneficiaries, and the best solution in this case is a combination of several types of economic incentives. Moral-spiritual motivation satisfies the more spiritual side of individuals which includes their beliefs and values. In this case, praises or criticisms, thanks or warnings that can be applied to employees at all hierarchical levels are used (Nicolescu and Verboncu, 2001).

● *Intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation.* The former type of motivation has its origin within the individual and is in accordance with his values and aspirations, motivating elements guiding him towards fulfilling his goals. One of the characteristics of intrinsic motivation is free will because the individual has the power to act upon its choices (Ryan and So, 2000b). At the opposite pole is the extrinsic motivation that comes from outside the individual. The literature considered that the last one lacked autonomy. However, according to Ryan & Deci (2000a), there is certain autonomy, even in the case of extrinsic motivation. Moreover, the leader should determine the involvement of human resources in order to achieve organizational goals because he has control over ways of motivation.

● *Cognitive motivation and affective motivation.* The cognitive motivation refers to the need to assimilate knowledge, to learn, but also to propose improvements. It focuses on the intellectual component of the individual (Nicolescu and Verboncu, 2001), and the leader uses various methods to satisfy it. The affective motivation aims to satisfy the emotional dimension of the employee by creating a pleasant environment and interpersonal relationships at work. In this case, elements belonging to moral-spiritual motivation such as ceremonies or thanksgiving are often used.

3. CONCLUSIONS

This paper addresses significant issues related to human resources motivation, considered a topical element for the contemporary society. From the above, it was found that human resources motivation represents a topic widely addressed in the literature. However, although the papers identified are great in number addressing motivation from different perspectives, they are far from sufficient, given the accelerated changes of the contemporary world and the dynamics of the environment where human resources evolve.

As regards the research limitations, this theoretical investigation focused on the concept of motivation highlighting definitions, theories and types of motivation in literature. However, other authors interested of this field could have a much more convincing or comprehensive approach to this topic.

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