

ARTICLE

The Role of Motivation in Enhancing Employee Performance

Roya Anvari^{1,*}

¹ *School of Business and Administrative Studies, The University of Georgia, Tbilisi, Georgia*

*Corresponding author. Email: r.anvari@ug.edu.ge

Received: 19 March 2026, Accepted: 21 April 2026, Published: 22 April 2026

Abstract

Motivation is a critical factor influencing human behavior and performance in organizational settings. It determines the level of effort, direction, and persistence individuals apply to achieve goals. Previous studies showed the importance of motivation in the organizational setting, individual efficiency, individual effectiveness, organizational efficiency and organizational effectiveness. However, motivation can be broadly categorized as intrinsic, arising from internal aspirations, or extrinsic, driven by external pressures or rewards. Various factors, including personal attitudes, emotional intelligence, values, job security, and management communication, shape motivation. Effective motivation enhances productivity and contributes to organizational success. This study conceptualizes motivational theories based on recent articles published in Google scholar and Scopus journals and focuses on Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, which posits that humans are driven by unsatisfied needs, progressing from basic physiological requirements to higher-level psychological and self-actualization needs. Understanding these motivational dynamics is essential for managers and leaders seeking to optimize employee engagement and performance in the workplace.

Keywords: Motivation; Intrinsic Motivation; Extrinsic Motivation; Employee Performance; Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs; Organizational Behavior

1. INTRODUCTION

Motivation refers to the elements that influence and energize human behaviour towards performance. Various research tries to identify the specific intended goals, that is, the motives that drive behaviour. Motivation is an important component that encourages people to give their all and contributes to the achievement of major business goals. A strong positive inspiration will increase the yield of workers, whilst a negative inspiration will decrease their productivity [1,2].

Many researchers identified three key elements of motivation. They include:

1. Intensity which describes the level of effort or energy that an individual puts in a particular job or task. It shows the level of commitment and grind an individual has.

2. Direction describes the channelling of effort to a particular task or job. It is not only about working hard but working in the right direction.

3. Persistence - This has to do with tolerance i.e the level of endurance that individual has towards the achievement of a goal. It describes how long they are willing to continue whether or not the situations are favorable. Motivation can also be divided into two types (2); Intrinsic and Extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation is a type of motivation that arises from an individual's internal aspirations. Motivation is influenced by a variety of factors, including personal attitudes, values, job security, employment expectations, emotional stability, and communication between management and employees. Many research has focused on various motivational approaches for steering personnel towards organizational productivity [3,4]. The issue for management is to understand how different motivating systems affect individual and group behaviour in an organized work environment. Motivating employees requires excellent management and leadership to attain organizational goals. There are various theories of motivation but the focus of this report is the Maslow's hierarchy of needs.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. The Theory of Motivation

In his book *Motivation and Personality*, Abraham Maslow [5] introduced the theory of Hierarchy of Needs. According to the Hierarchy of Needs theory, humans are driven by unsatisfied needs. Satisfying a lower need leads to pursuing higher needs. To put it another way, satisfying all levels of demands comes before prioritizing the need above it. Once basic requirements like food and shelter are met, safety becomes the primary motivator. Maslow, a clinical psychologist, believes that each individual has unique requirements. He categorized human needs into five groups: physiological, safety, love, esteem and self-actualization. According to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, psychological or physical well-being comes first, followed by safety, belongingness, social esteem, and self-actualization. Figure 1 depicts Maslow's hierarchy of needs, which divides human needs in the order of importance. Once a lesser need is met, we aspire for the higher need. Maslow's [5] hierarchy of needs suggests that most people's needs follow this model, but this might vary by individual. Completing one requirement does not guarantee the occurrence of another. Cronje [6] clarified Maslow's theory by emphasizing that people prioritize their needs based on their importance and strive to accomplish their goals [7]. Physiological needs, safety needs, social belongingness, esteem needs and self-actualization are summarized in the following parts:

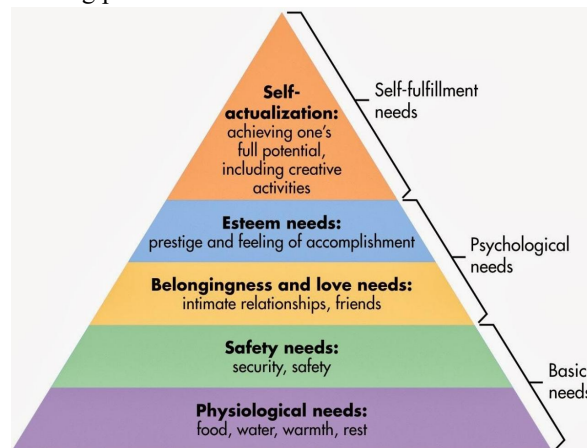


Figure 1. Maslow Hierarchy of Needs [5]

Physiological Needs

Psychological needs are the most fundamental necessities that every individual requires to survive. These include relief from thirst, hunger, and physical needs, as well as comfort. This category includes basic needs including food, shelter, and water. The organization offers financial benefits to employees to suit their physiological needs.

Safety Needs

Safety needs come after physiological demands. This refers to the necessity for protection from physical or emotional hazards in an environment. Examples of safety needs include job stability, medical insurance and a healthy work environment.

Social Belongingness

Social needs include love and belonging, which are related to interactions with others. Beyond basic survival needs, people seek affection, belonging, love, respect, care, nurturing, and friendship. This also includes group approbation, acceptance by family and friends, relationships, and a sense of belonging or love.

Esteem Needs

Esteem requires a sense of importance. Maslow [5] hierarchy of wants suggests that everyone eventually craves belonging. Employees require a sense of belonging and a platform to express themselves. This urge can stem from internal characteristics such as self-esteem, confidence, autonomy, strength, and accomplishment, as well as external factors like social standing, prestige, recognition, attention and praise.

Self-Actualization

Self-actualization is the most important need for employees to realize their maximum potential and fulfil themselves. Self-actualization requirements motivate employees to engage in innovative and creative activities. Maslow recognized that this need, due to its open nature, cannot be totally met. According to him, only a small fraction of employees achieve self-actualization. According to Martin [8] the demand for self-actualization cannot be fully satisfied.

2.2. More Types of Motivation: Motivating by Enhancing Fit with an Organization

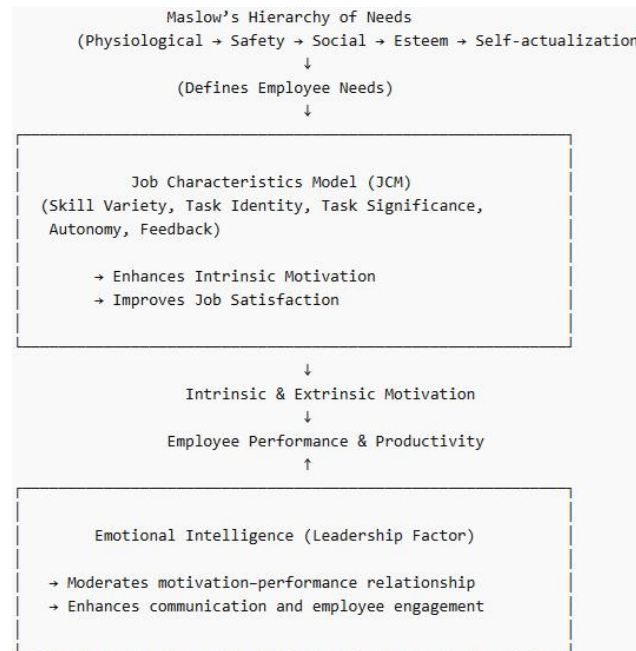


Figure 2. Conceptual Framework

Human resources in every organization are viewed as the most important determinant in achieving goals and determining organizational success or decline [9]. Enhancing Person-Organization fit is a systematic approach to motivation that connects an employee's values, goals and abilities with the organization's culture, mission and expectations [10]. This integration promotes a sense of belongingness, purpose and engagement, which serve as key drivers of motivation. There are various strategies for enhancing Person-Organization fit in an organization, including proper recruitment and selection using value-based interviews to assess cultural alignment, on-the-job training and orientation for new hires, career development that aligns individual career path and ambitions with organizational goals and objectives. Person-Organization fit increases job satisfaction and reduce employee turnover. However, some school of thought argues that it might reduce diversity and discourages innovation [9,11]. Goal-setting is another theory under motivation. It is a powerful tool for increasing motivation in organizations because it directs employee effort, develops persistence and enhances performance. An effective and consistent approach to goal setting includes three facets:

1. Goals should be SMART: SMART is an acronym that stands for specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and timely.
2. Goals should be manageable in number: Reasonable number of goals are sufficient to challenge employees and keep them engaged in their contribution to the business. Adding more goals is likely to have a negative impact on productivity and derail progress toward achieving any of them.
3. Goals should address both business results and personal development: Each year, the goal-setting process establishes a new contract between employee and manager; both should be equally invested in achieving the desired results. Well-written, regularly monitored goals provide the framework for accountability and the basis for productive performance conversations between managers and employees.

Based on the previous discussion, the following conceptual framework is developed. Figure 2 shows how Maslow's needs theory influences intrinsic and extrinsic motivation factors, while JCM

enhances intrinsic motivation which in turn leads to the employee performance. Not only these factors are important in the theory building, but also emotional intelligence plays as moderating variable that strengthens or weakens the relationship between motivation and employee performance.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study is designed as literature review based on the relevant research articles from Google scholar and Scopus indexed. The selected studies were analyzed using a thematic and conceptual analysis approach. Keywords were motivation, intrinsic, extrinsic and job performance. Inclusion criteria were articles 2020-2026 and peer-reviewed and non-English articles excluded from this study. Final sample was 45 articles.

4. DISCUSSION, THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

Previous studies showed that structuring jobs to increase intrinsic appeal is a key strategy for motivating individuals in organizations [4]. Organizations may increase motivation, productivity, and job satisfaction by creating jobs that are interesting, meaningful, and satisfying. This technique is based on the Job Characteristics Model (JCM) established by Hackman and Oldham, which emphasizes the importance of specific job dimensions in driving intrinsic motivation. The JCM identifies five core job dimensions that enhance intrinsic motivation by satisfying employees' psychological needs:

- a. skill variety: the degree to which a job requires diverse skills and talents.
- b. task identity: the extent to which a job involves completing a whole, identifiable piece of work.
- c. task significance: the perceived impact of the job on others or the organization.
- d. autonomy: the level of independence and decision-making freedom in the role.
- e. feedback: The extent to which the job provides clear information about performance.

Organizations can use a number of strategies to make work more interesting and motivating. Job enrichment involves increasing autonomy, responsibility, and skill use to make activities more meaningful e.g allowing a customer support worker to tackle complex situations individually rather than according to a strict script. Job rotation is another. Rotating personnel between tasks to provide diversity and prevent monotony can help make the job more interesting for the employees [12].

Previous studies showed that emotional intelligence should become a critical ability for leaders in such environments to achieve high organizational performance. In which emotional intelligence includes self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, and social skills that enable leaders to better understand their teams' emotional needs, manage stress in a healthy manner, and retain motivation throughout the periods of transition [13]. Emotional intelligence also enhances psychological safety and interpersonal trust, which are essential in encouraging innovation, creativity, and open communication [14]. In their studies they show how leader's emotional intelligence will be led to the motivation. The theoretical framework discussed the concept of emotional intelligence and its heightened significance in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. It discusses how emotional intelligence encompasses competencies such as self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills, which are essential for leadership and personal effectiveness. Emotional intelligence first popularised by Daniel Goleman [15], refers to the ability to perceive, control, and evaluate emotions—both one's own and those of others. This concept encompasses a range of competencies and skills that drive leadership performance, including self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. The COVID-19 pandemic has heightened the significance of emotional intelligence, especially as organisations and individuals navigate a landscape characterized by uncertainty, stress, and rapid change. The conceptual framework for emotional intelligence is based on two primary models: the ability model and the mixed model. The ability model, proposed by Mayer and Salovey, suggests that emotional intelligence involves four levels of abilities: perceiving emotions accurately in oneself and others, using feelings to facilitate thinking, understanding emotional meanings, and managing emotions. The mixed model, introduced by Goleman, goes beyond cognitive capacities and includes personality traits such as perseverance and the ability to motivate oneself. Various methods, such as self-report surveys and ability tests, measure emotional intelligence. These measurements assess an individual's ability to effectively deal with emotional challenges and to use emotional

information to guide thinking and behavior, which are critical components in personal and professional settings. The pandemic has amplified the need for these skills as organisations and individuals navigate a landscape of uncertainty, stress, and rapid change. As proposed by Mayer and Salovey, emotional intelligence includes four levels of abilities: perceiving emotions accurately, using emotions to facilitate thinking, understanding emotional meanings, and managing emotions. It focuses on the cognitive aspects of emotional intelligence. Hurley and Linsley [16] asserted that leaders with high emotional intelligence are better equipped to handle the emotional and psychological impacts of the pandemic. They can recognize and respond to their own emotions as well as those of their team members, fostering a sense of security and stability. Emotional intelligence helps leaders manage distributed teams, ensuring open communication and high morale despite physical separation. Leaders with high emotional intelligence can support their teams through the stresses of remote work and the blending of home and work life. Teachers and administrators with strong emotional intelligence have been crucial in modifying curricula and learning environments to support students during the pandemic. They are more attuned to students' emotional and psychological needs, which is vital as students face increased anxiety and stress [14]. Educators with high emotional intelligence can create engaging, empathetic, and supportive online learning environments, promoting student well-being and academic success despite the lack of in-person interactions. The pandemic has demonstrated that high emotional intelligence enables leaders, educators, and community members to navigate emotional challenges, maintain open communication, and provide support, thus enhancing overall well-being and performance. Based on the existing literature, we can formulate the hypothesis that

The importance of emotional intelligence in motivation, organizational performance and several key areas identified, particularly in the workplace and in educational settings. The following sections explore how emotional intelligence has become a crucial skill set for navigating the post-pandemic world. In the corporate sector, leaders with high emotional intelligence have been better equipped to handle the disruptions caused by the pandemic. These leaders are adept at recognising their own emotional states and those of their team members, allowing them to respond more effectively to the concerns and anxieties that have surfaced due to the pandemic. Leaders who demonstrate empathy and maintain clear, compassionate communication can foster a sense of security and stability for their employees, even in the face of uncertainty [14]. Furthermore, emotional intelligence has helped leaders manage distributed teams, facilitating the shift to remote work. Managers with high emotional intelligence are more capable of bridging the physical gap, ensuring that communication remains open and that team morale stays high. They are also better positioned to help their teams through the stresses of remote work and the blurring of home and work-life boundaries. In educational contexts, teachers and administrators with strong emotional intelligence have been crucial in adapting curricula and learning environments to better support students during the pandemic. Educators with high emotional intelligence are more attuned to the emotional and psychological needs of their students, which has been especially important as many students face increased anxiety and stress related [14]. Emotional intelligence in education has also extended to digital platforms, where teachers must engage students who may feel disconnected due to the lack of in-person interactions. Those skilled in EI are better at creating engaging, empathetic, and supportive online learning environments that promote student well-being and academic success. Their ability to manage their own emotions and understand others has been critical in providing effective care and leading community initiatives to bolster resilience and recovery which will leads to improved performance. Based on the above discussion the following hypotheses can be developed for future empirical research: H1: Intrinsic motivation positively affects employee performance; H2: Emotional intelligence moderates the relationship Emotional intelligence moderates the relationship between motivation (intrinsic and extrinsic) and employee performance. H3: Job characteristics model positively influence intrinsic motivation.

5. CONCLUSION

Motivation is a critical component of organizational success, boosting employee engagement, productivity and satisfaction through psychological processes that drive and direct behavior. The strategies addressed, such as improving person-organization fit, defining successful goals, changing expectations and organizing jobs to be interesting provide complementary approaches to building a

motivated workforce. Enhancing fit integrates individual values with organizational culture, resulting in a sense of purpose. Goal-setting concentrates effort and maintains tenacity by establishing clear, challenging targets. Changing expectations uses employees' views about effort and incentives to increase commitment. Making jobs more interesting taps into intrinsic drive by encouraging autonomy, variety and value. Together, these methods address a wide range of employee expectations. However, their success depends on tailoring approaches to individual differences, maintaining transparency, and balancing ambition with feasibility. By integrating these methods thoughtfully, organizations can cultivate a dynamic, motivated workforce poised for sustained performance and growth.

Funding Statement: This research received no external funding.

Contribution: Conceptualization, writing and editing: Roya Anvari

Informed Consent Statement: Not applicable

Data Availability Statement: All data is available.

Conflict of Interest Statement: The author declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

AI Declaration: The authors used AI-assisted tools (e.g., ChatGPT) in a limited capacity to support literature and language editing. No AI tools were used for results generation, or interpretation. All content has been carefully reviewed and validated by the authors.

REFERENCES

1. Ali, R., & Manthar, S. (2026). Motivating sustainability at work: How green pay and rewards influence environmental performance through autonomous motivation. *Transformations and Sustainability*, 2(1), 65–80.
2. Nguyen-Viet, B., Nguyen-Duy, C., & Nguyen-Viet, B. (2025). How does gamification affect learning effectiveness? The mediating roles of engagement, satisfaction, and intrinsic motivation. *Interactive Learning Environments*, 33(3), 2635–2653.
3. Deepalakshmi, N., Rajalakshmi, N., & Kavitha, J. (2026). An analysis of incentive programs and motivational strategies for employees at Perambalur Sugar Mills Limited. *Enigma: The Multidisciplinary International Journal*, 26(26).
4. Husein, A. E., & Wasiman, W. (2026). Literature review: Human resource management strategy in improving employee performance of profit-oriented organizations. *Eduvest-Journal of Universal Studies*, 6(1), 1124–1129.
5. Maslow, A. H. (1954). The instinctoid nature of basic needs. *Journal of personality*.
6. Cronje, A. (2011). *The professional development of science teachers for the implementation of a new curriculum*. University of Johannesburg (South Africa).
7. Margaretha, J. (2026). Digital Crisis Governance: A Systematic Study of Government Crisis Communication in The Social Media Era (2020–2025). *Eduvest-Journal of Universal Studies*, 6(2), 1958-1967.
8. Martin, R. A. (2001). Humor, laughter, and physical health: methodological issues and research findings. *Psychological bulletin*, 127(4), 504.
9. Ridhovan, A., & Nugroho, S. H. (2025). Influence of person-organization fit, compensation, and work-life balance on employee performance. *Research Horizon*, 5(2), 225–236.
10. Mantrala, M. K., Franklin, D., Kalwey, T., Krafft, M., Lim, Y., & Rangarajan, D. (2026). Sales force motivation, control system, and compensation & incentive research in the first half of the 21st century. *Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management*, 1–21.
11. Na-Nan, K., Phanniphong, K., Jaturat, N., Jaturat, N., & Jaturat, M. (2025). The influence of person-organization fit on employee engagement: Psychological contract as a mediating effect in Thailand's logistics industry. *Acta Psychologica*, 254, 104756.

12. Coelho, F., Rando, B., Aparício, D., Pontífice-Sousa, P., Gonçalves, D., & Abreu, A. M. (2025). The impact of educational gamification on cognition, emotions, and motivation: A randomized controlled trial. *Journal of Computers in Education*, 1–48.
13. Antonopoulou, H. (2024). The value of emotional intelligence: Self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, and empathy as key components. *Technium Education and Humanities*, 8, 78-92.
14. Lipton, L. L. (2026). *The influence of emotion regulation among high school administrators during conflict with parents and families: A phenomenological study* (Doctoral dissertation, Marymount University).
15. Goleman, D. (2001). An EI-based theory of performance. *The emotionally intelligent workplace: How to select for, measure, and improve emotional intelligence in individuals, groups, and organizations*, 1(1), 27-44.
16. Hurley, J., & Linsley, P. (Eds.). (2026). *Emotional intelligence for health and social care practice*. Taylor & Francis.