

MGMT 2303

Motivation Paper

Yanlin Zhu B00812966

Qian Zhang B00804300

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1 . Introduction

Motivation is the need or reason for doing something (Cambridge Dictionary, 2019). It is generally described as the needs that direct people to behavior to satisfy certain conditions, such as desires or goals. Motivations are commonly separated into two parts – drives and motives. Drives are primarily biological factors, like thirst and hunger, while motives are primarily driven by the social and psychological mechanisms. In addition, motivation can be intrinsic or extrinsic based on the its arising factor is internal or external. Most of time, behaviors are motivated by a mix of both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation and the nature of the mix can be changed over time (Boundless Psychology, 2019). Motivation is significant since it determines people's direction, intensity and persistence of effort (Colquitt, LePine, Wesson & Gellatly, 2019).

1.1. Purpose

In this paper, we are going to study a case where motivation was a factor and analyze it through needs theories and process theories to reveal the influence, outcome and significance of motivation.

2. Case

2.1. Case Description

Yanlin Zhu once participated in a math competition. At the very beginning, He wanted to improve his math knowledge by participating in this competition. He was good at mathematics and had the confidence to win. Therefore, he did some practice, but he did

not put his full attention to it. However, as time goes, he received many expectations for him to win the competition from his peers, tutor, and parents. So, he started to practice a lot because he is keen to live up to other's expectations. He began to see the competition as the whole focus of that period. However, Yanlin was too nervous to solve the problems and lost on the competition day. He was very disappointed with himself and felt that he had failed the expectations of the tutor. He also felt that it was unfair that others did not work hard like him but got better results. Since then, Yanlin has lost confidence in their mathematical abilities.

2.2. Issues

In this case, Yanlin had a negative mindset because he lost the competition due to nervousness. He was overworked due to the external pressure from others' expectations which could both be his extrinsic motivation and a heavy burden. Also, he lost his confidence only because of one loss. He attributed all factors of his fail to external factors.

3. Analysis

In this part, we are going to analyze Yanlin's experience through Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory and process theories including Expectancy Theory, Equity Theory, Goal Setting Theory and Variance Theory. We are going to track the change of his attitude to this competition to reveal how motivation influenced his direction, intensity and persistence of effort. Also, we are going to focus on the potential influence

regarding the role that the intrinsic and extrinsic factor plays in motivation that is a mix of both intrinsic and extrinsic factors.

3.1. Needs theory

According to Mcleod (2018), Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory consists of five tiers model of human needs which is often depicted as hierarchical levels within a pyramid. In his theory, needs lower down in the hierarchy must be satisfied before individuals can attend to needs higher up. From bottom to top, it includes the needs for physiological, safety, love and belonging, esteem and self-actualization.

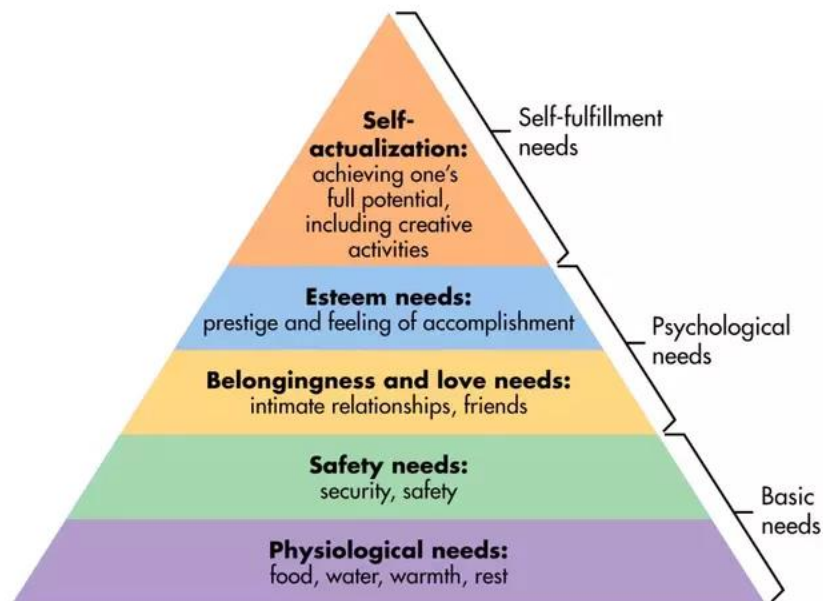


Figure 1. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Five-tier Model. Adapted from "Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs," by S. Mcleod, 2018. *Simply Psychology*. Retrieved 27 October 2019, from <https://www.simplypsychology.org/maslow.html>.

As figure 1 shows, in this five-tier model, the bottom levels (Physiological needs and safety needs) can be generally considered as drives while the upper levels

(Belongingness and love needs, Esteem needs, Self-actualization needs) can be considered as motives. In this case, we only need to focus on the motives part to figure out what needs are the motives to push Yanlin forward and what influence it brings to Yanlin.

In Yanlin's case, at the very beginning, the needs that motivated him was self-actualization needs since he intended to improve his math knowledge by participating in the competition. As for the reason, he told his peer and parents about this competition can be attributed to the need of interpersonal relationship which is the belongingness and love needs. As the external pressure increased, Yanlin started to pay much more attention to the competition than before, it even became the focus of Yanlin's life, occupying most of his free time. This transformation was driven by his esteem needs: he desired for reputation or respect from others. Therefore, the expectation became his external pressure, he was driven to satisfy their expectations to meet his esteem needs. Lastly, among all his behaviors and outcomes, his change after the failure of the completion is essential to find out how needs influence motivation. After his failure, he did not meet his needs for self-actualization. According to Mcleod (2018), different from other deficiency needs which motivation decrease as needs are met, the need for self-actualization is a growing need that motivation increase as needs are met. However, on the other hand, this also means that if there is a failure in meeting this need, the motivation to meet this need will decrease. Therefore, after the failure of the competition, Yanlin lost his interest and

confidence in the math which would decrease his need for self-actualization in math field and as the consequence, his motivation in learning math lost, too.

3.2. Process theory

In this case, Yanlin's motivation mainly comes from his determinations to win the competition, confidence in math learning, and the need to meet expectations from his parents, friends, and tutor. His goal and confidence are the internal factors and the expectation from others is the external factor (Colquitt, LePine, Wesson & Gellatly, 2019).

It is worth noting that he has a strong motivation to be successful. According to Expectancy Theory, Yanlin has strong self-efficacy, that is, he believes that he has enough mathematical capabilities to perform well in the competition. The sources of his self-efficacy mainly come from his past achievements in mathematics like his ability to solve problems is recognized by peers and tutors.

Next, having a self-set goal is another reason for his strong motivation. Goal Setting Theory sees the goal as the main driver of effort and perseverance (Colquitt, LePine, Wesson & Gellatly, 2019). Yanlin was insisting on practicing before the competition because the goal of winning drives him to strive. However, this goal is not a specific and difficult goal, which makes people reach their maximum level without exceeding their ability. Yanlin's goal can be more specific. For example, he can outline the number of practice problems he needs to do correctly every day. A specific and difficult goal will give him the direction of effort. In order to achieve it, he will be more serious in preparing for

the competition and work longer on it. The task performance will be improved in this way (Colquitt, LePine, Wesson & Gellatly, 2019).

After losing the competition, Yanlin thinks it is unfair that others do not work hard like him but get better results. This thought decreases his motivation. He starts to doubt whether effort plays an important role in performance, and he feels too tired to keep exerting effort. Under the circumstances, Yanlin compares himself with other competitors and thinks his ratio of outcomes to inputs is less than his comparison's ratio. According to the Equity Theory, his thought is a cognitive distortion. Also, he gets into an equity distress and cannot recover from the emotion (Colquitt, LePine, Wesson & Gellatly, 2019).

Yanlin's judgment on equity is subjective and distorted. Rationally, he is not aware of the level of effort and ability of each contestant. In other words, some contestants may be more prepared for the competition or be more talented in mathematics to achieve good results. He cannot attribute his failure solely to other people's problems.

Then, in order to stop feeling this emotion, Yanlin can reduce the intensity and durability of efforts to shrink efforts (Colquitt, LePine, Wesson & Gellatly, 2019). He also needs to upgrade his mindset to overcome nervousness. Third, he should objectively look at the cause of failure, find problems from himself.

Finally, Yanlin's loss in this competition caused his fear and anxiety of learning mathematics. It is an emotional cue, some negative emotions like anxiety make him doubt about task accomplishment, then reduce his self-efficacy. In order to get motivation, Yanlin

needs to rediscover his confidence in learning math (Colquitt, LePine, Wesson & Gellatly, 2019).

3.3. Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation

As discussed before, motivation can be intrinsic and extrinsic based on the arising factor is internal or external. According to Boundless Psychology (2018), “Intrinsically-motivated behavior are generated by the sense of personal satisfaction that they bring” (para. 5), while “Extrinsically-motivated behaviors, in contrast, are performed in order to receive something from others” (para. 6). Generally, intrinsic motivation comes from the inside of an individual while extrinsic motivation comes from outside of an individual. However, in reality, it is hard to find a behavior that is purely intrinsic or extrinsic motivated. Most of time, people’s behaviors are motivated by of mix of intrinsic and extrinsic motivations and the nature of the mix can be changed over time. In this part, we are going to analyze the influence of the change of the dominant positions of the internal and external factor in a motivation through Yanlin’s case.

In Yanlin’s case, at the very beginning when he decided to participate in the math competition, he was majorly driven by intrinsic motivation. It was his personal interest or the enjoyment of the task itself that motivated him to do this, not the external factors. Those people who is majorly intrinsically motivated, like Yanlin, are likely to perform better or improve themselves by doing tasks. They do not show much attraction to the honor of winning or the profit of the result. At this time, the internal factor was taking the dominant position of his motivation.

However, intrinsic motivation can diminish when extrinsic motivation is given. This process is known as the overjustification effect (APA Dictionary of Psychology, 2019). According to Cherry (as cited in Cicchino, 2015), the extrinsic factor can be considered as an activity that people engaged in or a behavior, they perform to earn reward or avoid punishment. He believes that the only difference between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation is punishment. In this case, the external factor took the leading position since he received many expectations from others which made him focus on the competition and devoted himself to it. One of the reasons that he worked so hard is that he did not want to fail their expectations. The disappointment of those who care about him can be considered a punishment of the failure of the competition. According to Boundless Psychology (2019), this desire to avoid the punishment of from the external factor could lead to the extinguish of intrinsic motivation. It could create a dependence on extrinsic rewards for continued performance. It also could have a negative influence on his behavior from the external punishment which may lead to the loss of intrinsic motivation.

Though punishment and the potential negative influence can be a distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic, Cicchnio (2015) could not agree on Cheery's (as cited in Cicchnio, 2015) point that punishment is the only difference between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. He admitted that being extrinsically motivated can be affected by the trepidation of potential punishment while intrinsic one focuses on "personal reward" with no thoughts of punishment. However, he emphasizes that even though the influence

of external factors is obvious and effective, we could not ignore the secret and permanent influence of intrinsic factor. The extrinsic is temporary, only the five core pillars that intrinsically motivates a person can lead him to success: Determination, Desire, Discipline, Devotion, and Dedication which he refers as 5D Model for Goal-Achievement.

4. Conclusion

Motivation has both internal and external factors. It determines the direction, extent, and durability of a person's efforts. In this case, we found that strong self-efficacy has a positive impact on motivation. However, the failure of a task may cause anxiety and fear, leading to a decrease in self-efficacy, then reduce motivation. Finally, we discussed about the influence of the change of dominant position of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. We find out that the intrinsic motivation is within an individual and focuses on its personal reward while extrinsic motivation focuses on the reward and punishment from external environment. Compare to intrinsic motivation, the extrinsic motivation is more obvious but its influence is only temporary, while the intrinsic motivation often influence more deeply and permanent.

5. Appendices

5.1. Interview Summary

Yanlin: Once, I participated in a math competition. My math ability is good, so my tutor and I had high expectations of me. I spent lots of effort into preparing for the competition. However, maybe I put too much pressure on myself. I was so nervous on the competition day that I even couldn't figure out an easy problem. I lost at last. Since then, I lost confidence in learning math.

Qian: How did you feel when you lost the competition?

Yanlin: I was disappointed in myself. I also felt upset about why others did not work hard as me but got better results. You know It's unfair.

Qian: You think it was unfair that others did not work hard like you but got better results. Did this thought decrease your motivation?

Yanlin: Well, it decreased my motivation to some extent. I started to doubt whether effort plays an important role in success. I felt too tired to keep exerting effort after I had this thought.

Qian: Which factor is your main motivation? Your goal or your tutor's expectation?

Yanlin: My goal motivated me a lot at the very beginning, but when I felt my tutor, parents, and some friends expected more and more from me, my main motivation switch to meet their expectations.

5.2. Analytical problems

When we begin analyzing the case, we developed some problems to clarify:

What is Yanlin's motivation?

Why does he have a strong motivation to win the competition?

Which motivations have a greater impact on Yanlin behavior? Internal or external?

Will the dominant position of internal-external motivation switch? In other words, if internal causes have a greater impact on people's behavior at first, will external factors influence behavior more than internal over time?

Does a loss of sense of equity have a negative impact on motivation?

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