

DO NEED BASED MOTIVATION PRACTICES MAKE HAPPY EMPLOYEES? INTEGRATING THE SUPPLY CHAIN OF HAPPINESS WITH EMPLOYEE MOTIVATION

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Abstract

Even though the work life is one of the significant life domains that contribute to the happiness and satisfaction, it is not the only life domain that make employee happy and satisfied. Human mind is much more complex organism that has many domains that positively or negatively influence to the happiness and satisfaction of life. These life domains integrated within the individual as a chain that supply happy, unhappy, satisfying and unsatisfying feelings and emotions that create the happiness and satisfaction with life in a given time. Unhappy experience of one life domain is negatively influence to the other life domains as well. This is stimulated by the macro level socio, cultural and economic causes. Therefore, the organizational motivational practices should not necessarily focus only on work related motivation but need to think the happiness and satisfaction supply chain of an individual.

Keywords:

Happiness, Motivation, Positive Psychology, Management

Introduction

Since the beginning of Employer-employee relationships, how to motivate workers was a critical problem area in management. Motivation is generally defined as any influence that triggers, directs or maintains goal-directed behavior (Hellriegel, Jackson, & Slocum Jr, 1999, p. 462). In an organizational context to get efficient, effective and responsible service from the workers, employers give extrinsic and intrinsic benefits as triggers to their employees to get motivated. Even if the motivation has been a significant managerial problem of the

employer-employee relationship for long-time, the existing motivation practices still evolving and not yet approach to a final conclusion. Even though, the existing empirical studies on motivation suggested these extrinsic and intrinsic triggers influence to the motivation, there are limited studies examining the subjective aspect of motivation. Literature in western countries suggested that employees are more concern about the intrinsic motivation rather than extrinsic motivation. Following the western tradition, most of the employee motivation practices in Sri Lanka have focused on providing intrinsic and extrinsic rewards for their employees to be happy and satisfied with the organization and their employment. However, Still Sri Lanka is one of the countries that have least productivity of labour and therefore finding a suitable worker’s motivation practice has been an unsolved problem in Sri Lanka.

Present Approaches to Motivation

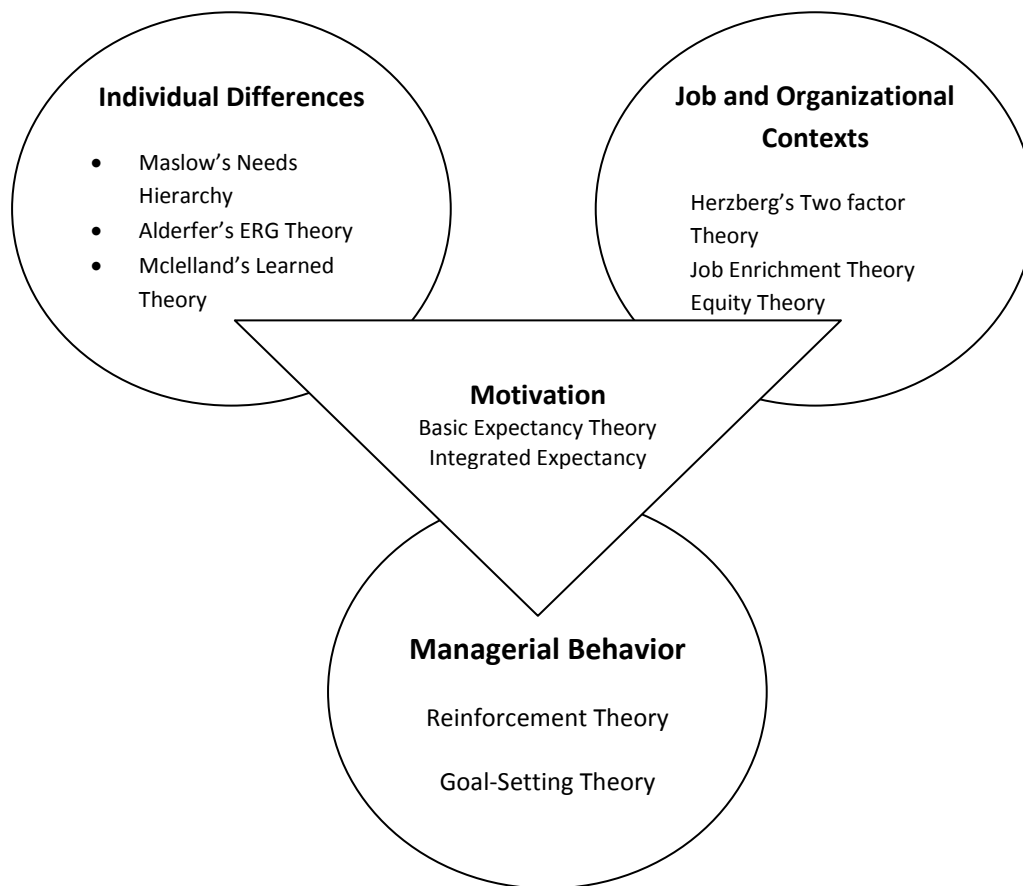


Figure 01: Approaches to Understand Motivation

Source: (Hellriegel, Jackson, & Slocum Jr, 1999)

Most of these management practices have stem from four main schools of human motivation (Figure 01). As explained in the literature most of the existing motivation theories stem from the objective aspect of work motivation. Even though some of the objects that are stimulate the motivation are intangible (recognition) they are still ensure the objective well-being of the

employees. Theories on individual differences, which have focused on the objects such as needs, values, competencies and other personal characteristics that people, bring to their job. Theories on job and organizational context that have focused on objects of job characteristics that influence to the workers motivation. Theories on managerial behavior explains how manager's behavior influence to the worker's motivation and integrated expectancy model on motivation discusses combined objects or factors that influence to the work motivation. Apart from that some authors classified these theories into two broad categories as content theories and process theories. Content theorists have focused on what objects and instruments make people motivated and process theorists have focused on how people get motivated through objects. Content theories have suggested that humans are sensitive to certain external stimulant they experience in work environment. These external stimulant can be either physical (extrinsic) or psychological (Intrinsic). Process theories of motivation focused on the psychological process that involved in motivation through objects over external stimulant. This paper not intended to discuss the demerits of each of these theories, but suggesting the common misconception that influence with each of the existing motivation theories and introduce subjective approach to human motivation.

Motivation or Well-being: Half-empty Vs. Half Full thinking

Till the introduction of positive psychology in late nineteen nineties most of the psychological theories have discussed the illnesses, problems and dark sides of humans (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). By its nature motivation is a psychological construct and therefore existing theories on motivation have the inherent problematic nature of psychology. Every theory on motivation contributed to explain the nature of the human motivation, but they were faraway from been perfect models to define human motivation.

Major problem of these theories is, they were "need based" motivation theories that tries to motivate workers by fulfilling unmet needs and wants of a person. Every person have their own unmet needs and wants, therefore they have half-empty (half-full) glasses on their hands. Existing motivation practices perceived the glass as half-empty glass and expect to make it

full by providing organizational stimulant. There are two problems with this half-empty approach to motivation.

Firstly, unmet needs and wants of the people have not always met by organizational stimulant. Every person has its own life domains that bring subjective well-being (happiness and satisfaction). Most of the people need to be happy and satisfied with their lives by satisfying needs and wants that brought unhappiness and dissatisfaction to their lives. Work life is one of the domains of person's life but it is not the only domain that decides the happiness and satisfaction of his or her life. Even though the organizations provide first-class extrinsic and intrinsic motivations to their workers that not necessarily bring the happiness and satisfaction to the worker, if his other life domain becomes a disturbance to his happiness and satisfaction.

Secondly, half-empty approach of motivation ignores the worker's own capacity and strengths to achieve their own needs and wants. External motivation stimulus increases the dependent thinking among the employees and thinks that it is organizational responsibility to bring happiness and satisfaction to their lives. This will increase the work life satisfaction and hence the expected behavior from the employee, but the dependent thinking might create situation that negatively influence to their other life domains such as family life. However, if the glass is perceived as half-full, human motivation needs to be focused on the strengths of the employees rather than their needs. This discussion paper is aim to introduce positive psychology as a theoretical approach to work motivation and explains how to make happy employees by understanding their life domains. Next section would describe the relationship between the subjective aspect and objective aspect of the well-being.

How happy people achieve well-being?

Modern societies suffer from a broad range of problems such as crime, teen pregnancy, alcoholism, drug addiction, educational under achievements, gambling and domestic violence owing to the inability of many individuals to control themselves (Baumeister & Heatherton, 1996). Owing to the complex and competitive human society, people's expectations have

been high but the opportunities to achieve the expected results have been lower. Mostly there is a gap between expectations and actual outcome of human behavior. Therefore, people have the goal of self-regulating themselves “satisfying” rather than maximizing (Schwartz, Ward, Monterosso, Lyubomirsky, White, & Lehman, 2002). According to the Schwartz et al., there are some people who are maximizers and some people who are satisfiers. This cognitive nature of maximizer or satisfier influence the individual’s global happiness and satisfaction of life.

There have been arguments over the coexistence of objective well-being and subjective well-being at the same time. How does the objective well-being influence to the subjective well-being or otherwise, how does the subjective well-being influence to the objective well-being? Self-regulation is a process of self-corrective adjustments originating within the person, and they are needed to stay on track for whatever purpose is being served (Carver, 2004). It involves establishing goals, monitoring and evaluating behavior (Kocovski & Endler, 2000). Self-regulation is an important cognitive process that people seek to exert control their subjective feelings, impulses and appetites over their task performances and material outcomes (Baumeister, Gailliot, De Wall, & Oaten, 2006). Simon (1955) argues that owing to both to the complexity of the human environment and the limitation of human information processing, the presumed goal of maximization is virtually always unrealizable in real life (Simon, 1955). If there is no self-regulation over the expected results and the actual results people may feel sadness and anxiety.

As far as subjective well-being is defined as the person’s happiness and life satisfaction, people who have a high subjective well-being recognized as subjectively successful people. When the gap between actual and expected objective outcome is narrowly perceived, mostly the expected outcomes achieved and people feel happy and satisfied. When the gap is wider perceived positive or negative feelings depend on the individual ability to self-regulate the expectations and outcomes. Maximizers always have very high-level of objective expectations and goals and therefore be subjectively unsuccessful, unless they achieved their goals. On the other hand, satisfiers always evaluate what they achieve in a scale with satisfaction they can afford. If the outcome is at a threshold acceptance level, they will satisfy with it. The characteristic to perceive this gap in a positive way still make the people happy,

satisfied and feel they are successful. On the contrary inability to perceive the gap in a positive way makes the people unhappy, dissatisfied and feels failures.

According to Nicholson and Andrews (2005), objective well-being and subjective well-being could not exist independently to each other (Nicholson & Andrews, 2005, p. 143). Based on the comprehensive literature analysis, it has suggested there are at least three mechanisms that drive people towards certain behavior (Arthur, Khapova, & Wilderom, 2005; Hall & Chandler, 2005; Nicholson & Andrews, 2005).

1. Subjective well-being is a direct outcome of objective well-being. People who achieve the objective well-being feel good, hence achieve the subjective well-being. When the objective outcomes are not the anticipated results, the person would be subjectively dissatisfied. In this mechanism, objective well-being leads to achieve subjective well-being.
2. Subjective well-being is *ex-ant anticipation* of future expected objective well-being. People feel happy when they expect good in the future and because of the good feeling and motivation, the objective well-being will actually achieve. In this mechanism, subjective well-being leads to achieve the objective well-being.
3. Subjective well-being is *ex-post* rationalization of the objective well-being. People evaluate the objective outcomes and regulate their measures of subjective well-being. In order to maintain the mental equilibrium it avoids them to keep unrealistic expectations and been too disappointed over negative outcomes.

Importance of understanding the Dominant life domains

Subjective well-being is a psychological construct, it is not observable and verifiable (Hall & Chandler, 2005). It is difficult to measure the subjective well-being and the sources of subjective well-being of an individual. Recent developments in subjective measures of happiness, satisfaction and well-being have questioned the validity of using only objective measures to explain the well-being and motivation. Not all the human behaviors expect objective outcomes and different people set their own standards of measurements of

achievements depending on the life domain and some internal and external factors. One person can feel well-being for an outcome that created an unpleasant experience to another (Bartolome & Evans, 1990). Happiness and satisfaction of life is the supreme aim of the human life (Diener, 2009). According to Ed Diener, money and all the other material outcomes mean for human satisfaction but not the end, the end is the well-being of the person, and it is subjective. Sometimes people have wealth but need to sacrifice certain subjective aspects of their lives to achieve it. They are not feeling happiness and hence, not achieve the subjective well-being. On the other hand, some people have no wealth but feel the happiness of their lives and hence achieve the subjective well-being. Differences in subjective definitions of the individual goals, objectives and desired outcomes, influence to the differences in subjective meaning of the well-being. His own feeling of happiness and satisfaction of life explain the person's subjective well-being. Subjective well-being consists of emotional and cognitive utilities that are only identifiable with introspection, and not by observation or verification.

Most of the life events and behaviors of a person positively or negatively influence to the one or more life domains that brings happiness and satisfaction of life. Therefore, organizational motivation need to concentrated dominant life domains of the individual. Workplace strategies increasing personal wellbeing may have positive effects on the employment relationship. Organisations wishing to develop adaptable, resilient, and retained workforces may benefit from promoting aspects of well-being (Windle & Treuer, 2008). Every person aims to achieve happiness and satisfaction of life, the life domains that bring the happiness and satisfaction is different from individual to individual. Finance, family life, work, social life and health are some of the domains that contributed to the well-being of a person but they were not the only domains that contribute to it (Easterlin & Sawangfa, 2007). People family life, work life, economic status, social life and leisure life consists with the different life domains and satisfaction with specific domain provide some weight to the subjective well-being of the life. Therefore, domain satisfaction needs to be defined as a predictor of the subjective well-being of life that been measured by overall or general subjective life satisfaction and happiness. Even though the manager's only concern for work related life of a worker, work related motivation would affect only to the work life domain of the workers. Traditional motivational tools (pay, recognition, achievements, entertainment etc) would

contribute to the happiness and satisfaction of the work and employee relation domains, but it does not bring the subjective well-being of life.

Measuring the subjective well-being

In order to understand how people feel happy and satisfy it is important to measure the subjective well-being. Scales of global life satisfaction and happiness have been developed back in 1961 by the Neugarten, Havighurst, Tobin (Neugarten, Havighurst, & Tobin, 1961). The cognitive component and the affective component of the Subjective well-being (here operationally defined as subjective well-being) has been the yardstick of differentiate the measurements of subjective well-being (Pavot & Diener, 2009). Measures of the affective component focus on general happiness and positive and negative life effects and measures of cognitive components focus on the life satisfaction. Andrew and Robinson (1991) comprehensively elaborated the available measures of subjective well-being. They indicated that there is a remarkable increase of studies have been done on the subjective well-being and there are different scales to measure the different dimensions of subjective well-being. According to their explanations, there are two broad categories of subjective well-being scales; Single item scales and multi item scales (Figure 2).

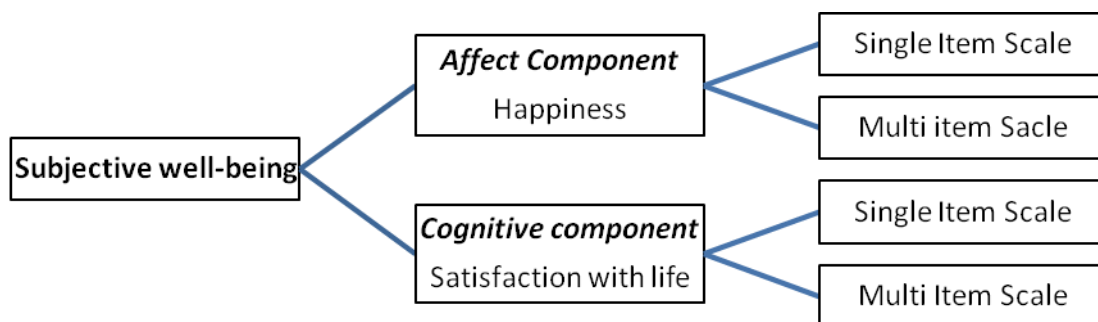


Figure 2: Focus and Scope of subjective well-being global measures

The available measures of subjective well-being either assess affective or cognitive components of positive feeling using single item or multi item global measurements (Lyubomirsky & Lepper, 1997, p. 139). Bradburn's Affect balance scale (1969), Andrew and Withey's Delighted-terrible scale (1976), Cantril's Self-anchoring scale (1960) and Bradburn's Global happiness item (1969) are the popular single item scales that measure the

subjective well-being. Single item scales use only one question to measure the happiness and life satisfaction (Andrew & Robinson, 1991, p. 72; Lyubomirsky & Lepper, 1997, p. 139). In Single item scales, it asks single question that starts with “Your life as a whole....” To measure the general happiness and satisfaction or “how satisfied you with....” to measure the specific domain satisfaction. Expected response to the question can be long or short depend on the research approach and data collection method. Owing to the economies of the administration majority of the studies of subjective well-being have use the single item scales. Even though intense usage of single item measure of happiness and satisfaction in the early days of subjective well-being, there are number of limitations of single item scales over the multi item scales (Diener E. , 2009). Generally compared to single item measures, multi item scales have higher validity and reliability because it reduces the random measurement errors. However, multi item scales are not very attractive for the practicing managers. Dominant life domain it not a static and it is dynamically changing with the environmental changes of life. There are limited opportunities to conduct multi items subjective well-being test at different situations with the large number of employees in a working environment. Therefore this paper suggests more practical approach for the managers to understand the well-being and dominant life domains of the employees.

How Mangers can understand well-being and dominant life domains of employees?

Through simple two questions managers can understand the dominant life domain of the employee. Are you happy/satisfied with your life? And why you say so? The reasons that explain the workers’ own assessment of his happiness and satisfaction would indicate their dominant life domains that influence their subjective well-being. It might be work life but not always the case with all employees. When manager understand the dominant life domain that make the person happy and satisfied with their lives, it is easy to develop integrated motivation tools that uniquely address each individual worker. The tools should not focus only on work related behavior. If an employee involving in inventive activities during his leisure time and outcomes of his inventive activities is his dominant life domain that given higher contribution to his subjective well-being, the work life will become sub life domain that act as supporting domain of subjective well-being. Therefore, work related extrinsic or intrinsic benefits will not contribute to the subjective well-being than getting a patent right and publishing his invention in mass media. When the organization is trying to give triggers

that related to work life domain, it will not affect to such employees who has different dominant life domain, unless the triggers indirectly contributed to the dominant life domain. If the manager is willing to give triggers to improve his leisure time inventive activities, then the contribution from work life to the subjective well-being will be increased through the contribution of work life domain to leisure life domain (Figure 03).

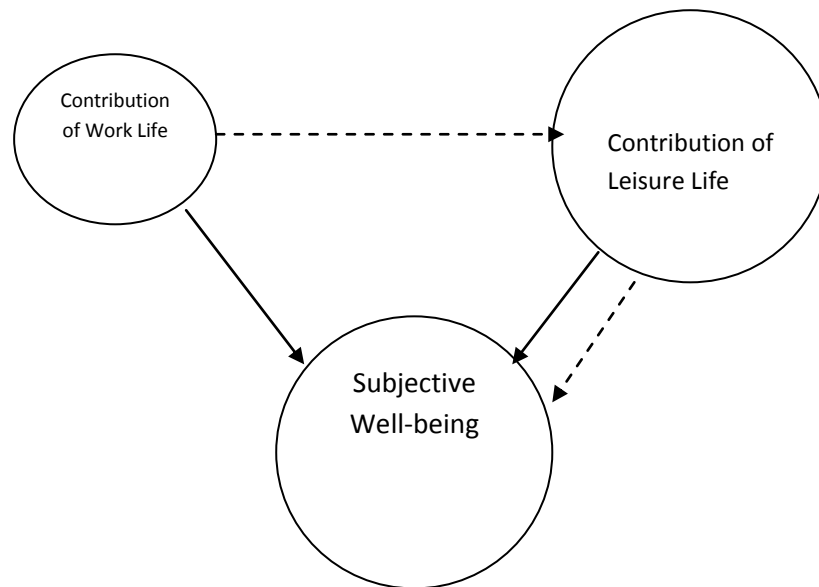


Figure 03: Integrating work life domain with dominant life domain

Conclusions

Human motivation is more complex and dynamic process that describe within the organizational work motivation. There is a unavoidable relationship between different life domains that affect the subjective well-being of life. Therefore, the famous management motto “do not bring personal matters to the work place” and “ keep your personal problem home” will no longer valid. Incidences and events that happen outside the organizations still influence to the happiness and satisfaction of workers and hence influence to their work related behavior. Level of happiness and satisfaction and the dominant life domains that bring such happiness and satisfaction need to identify as strengths of the employees and need to trigger such domains through work life domain. This will increase the global subjective well-being that brings the balance of life between objective and subjective well-being. Human

mind is much more complex organism that has many domains that positively or negatively influence to the happiness and satisfaction of life. These life domains integrated within the individual as a chain that supply happy, unhappy, satisfying and unsatisfying feelings and emotions that create the happiness and satisfaction with life in a given time. Unhappy experience of one life domain is negatively influence to the other life domains as well. This is stimulated by the macro level socio, cultural and economic causes. Therefore, the organizational motivational practices should not necessarily focus only on work related motivation but need to think the happiness and satisfaction supply chain of an individual.

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