



MOTIVATION AND CAREER SUCCESS, ARE THEY RELATED? AN EMPIRICAL STUDY IN INDIAN IT INDUSTRIES

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ABSTRACT

In today's environment, organizations thrive and survive on human resources. Therefore, it has become important to realize organizational and individual goals, which in turn depend on self-motivation as well as self-satisfaction. Acquiring and retaining talent has posed a major challenge in recent time, more or less in each and every organization. In desperate efforts to retain their talents, people in charge of organizations try several options - from deferred payment, offering bonus related to their tenure in the job to even tying them with bond or other types of financial contracts. But none of these have ever been proved to be truly effective. Available research evidence has, however, indicated a strong linkage between motivation and employee tenure (Bull, 2005). In the present paper, an attempt has been made to find out whether scope for career progression and attainment of promotions lead to creating a better-motivated workforce. Employees (n = 155) working in the Information Technology Sectors in different cities in India were the sample of the present study. The data was subjected to a number of statistical analyses such as Correlation and One way ANOVA. The available data seem to indicate that there exists a highly significant relationship ($p < 0.000$) between the number of promotions attained by an individual employee and their level of motivation. The present finding might provide a valuable insight in understanding employee behaviour and should perhaps be taken into account while making a strategy for retaining employees in an organization.

KEYTERMS: *Employee Motivation, Expectancy theory, Promotion, Employee Retention, Organizational Commitment*

INTRODUCTION

In today's highly competitive business environment, organizations thrive and survive on human resources. A firm can have a sustainable competitive advantage only when it possesses a unique human capital that is not only able to contribute towards adding value to the product or services rendered by the firm, but also is committed and loyal to the organization. The most important asset of any organization is its human resources. Even when all the other resources owned by an organization, such as financial, technological or physical resources are in place, everything might go haywire if the firm does not possess an excellent group of people who will be handling these resources in the right way. In addition, unlike other resources, which will be either eroded over time or would be eventually imitated by other firms and thus would be losing the edge over other firms, the

human resource will become only richer with passing time and experience. This, of course, does not happen automatically and the organization will have to invest a lot in its employees in order to transform them into true resource that will add value to the organization. This also means that one has not only to find the best talent available and nurture them, but also to retain the talent in the firm and develop them to their fullest potential. However, once a group of employees are developed painstakingly over a period of time by an organization, the competitors would always be stalking around to 'snatch' or 'poach' them away. So it's a major challenge for the organization to sustain and retain its workforce as a lot of cost is incurred on them directly or indirectly. High productivity and performance of most organizations could not be realized without employee's support and contribution. Therefore managers should concern on issues and problems



encountered by employee in organizations. Therefore, it has become important to realize organizational and individual goals, which in turn depend on self-motivation and self-satisfaction. Good human resource is becoming an increasingly scarce commodity. With the fierce market competition, it is difficult to find good people in the first place but retaining them in the firm and protecting them from poachers and head hunters are becoming a truly uphill task. Job opportunities today are much better compared to yester years and people are hardly found to stay in any job for too long. Unlike the employees of the past generation, today people are always on the move.

Employee Work Motivation, Career Success and Promotion

The term motivation is originally derived from a Latin word meaning 'push to act for satisfying a need' (Butkus & Green, 1999), and various researchers have offered various definitions of motivation. A number of authors have described motivation as a goal directed behavior. According to Kreitner and Kinicki (2001) motivation represents "those psychological processes that cause the stimulation and persistence of voluntary actions that are goal directed". The process of motivation is usually explained in terms of a driving force within an individual, which compels him/her to achieve the specific goal/s in order to fulfill the need or expectation.

The concept of motivation thus implies that motivation provides an individual with both direction and intention to behave in such a way as to attain a desirable objective (Mukherjee, 2007). Oosthuizen (2001) argues that any comprehensive theory of motivation should be able to explain how human behaviour is guided or focussed in accordance to their levels of motivation. Motivation is traditionally explained in terms of driving force acting within an individual, which compels him to achieve some objective/s in order to fulfill his specific needs or expectation.

Employee motivation remains a key issue for organizations today. With the rapidly changing environment in the age of globalization and open market scenario the solution to problems related with employee motivation is becoming increasingly complex. This is due, in part, to the fact that what motivates the employees keeps on changing constantly (Bowen & Radhakrishna, 1991). Organizations need to understand the need of the employees as well as ways to motivate them within the context of the roles they perform. The managers need to

understand the fundamental components of motivation, and the underlying processes involved to

develop a motivated workforce. According to Oosthuizen (2001), motivation is the reason behind any goal-directed behaviour of an individual. This belief is being strongly shared by Houkes et al (2001) when they pointed out that it is the lack of motivation that might eventually lead to the decision of leaving the organization. In a longitudinal study conducted by them, they found that the turnover intention is primarily predicted by unmet career expectations of the employees. Oosthuizen (2000), also strongly believes that one of the most important roles of a manager is not only to motivate the employees successfully but also to influence their job related behaviour in order to achieve the organisational goal more efficiently as well as effectively.

The factors that motivate employees can be divided into two groups; external and internal factors (Jones et al., 2005). According to Dundar et al., (2007) the external factors for motivation are working condition, wages, company's image, job guaranty, promotion, social environment, and status. Internal factors can briefly be defined as providing employee satisfaction over businesses responsibility. Internal factors not only provide employees with satisfaction but also ensure opportunities for career growth, which shows an important effect on employee's motivation (Karatepe & Uludağ, 2007).

There are also reasons to believe that promotions can very well lead to increasing employee movement. Within the firm, promotions are used as signals of ability of the employee (Forbes & Wertheim, 1995). Armstrong (2001) revealed in his research that people are motivated when they expect a course of action is likely to lead to the achievement of a certain goal and a valued reward - one that satisfies their needs. He goes even further to assert that the organization can provide the framework that can facilitate higher levels of motivation through incentives and rewards, satisfying work and opportunities for learning as well as career prosperity. Graham and Bennett (1995) agree with this and reveal that career development involves higher status and responsibilities which can take place in one organization or through movement between organizations or a combination of both but the prospect of career advancement always motivate employees to work hard.

Promotions can be a major determinant in overall salary growth over time (Gerhart & Milkovich, 1989). With a promotion the employee typically receives a pay increase and moves to a lower relative position to a new pay hike at the same time having the opportunity to earn more and perhaps more frequent within-grade increases with much more responsibilities also (Milkovich & Newman, 1993). Hence, it is



expected that highly promoted employees to experience greater salary growth and obviously very less voluntarily leave the organization. Indeed, it has been found out by Stumpf and Dawley (1981) and Dreher (1982) in their studies that there has a very significant and negative relationship exist between promotions and employee turnover.

Nomura Research Institute Ltd (2005) also agreed that career advancement and reward systems are the sources of motivation at the work place. It is, therefore, logical to believe that there may be a negative impact on motivation, morale, job satisfaction and performance in instances where employees' expectations for advancement are not met. Indeed in their study, Nomura Research Institute Ltd (2005) also found out that employees (especially young people) get tremendously demotivated when they feel there is little chance of personal growth in their career.

Different researchers have found out that employee motivation is always related to career success or number of promotions they received from the organization as well as career growth. We have also seen that career development involves higher status and responsibilities which can always motivate employees to work hard.

Vroom's Expectancy Theory or VIE Theory of Work Motivation

The original thinking behind what has come to be known as expectancy theory, or Vroom's Valence-Instrumentality-Expectancy (VIE) theory (Beck, 1983), can be traced back in the theory of Tolman and Lewin in 1932 and 1938 respectively (Petri, 1996). Vroom was, however, the first scholar to elaborate on this thinking in a motivational context in 1964 (Gouws, 1995). Since it has been originated in the psychological thinking of some 60 years ago, the expectancy theory has been presented in many variations till today. But the most common to all versions of this theory is the basic concept that people's behaviour depends on their beliefs and expectations regarding future events, especially those which are most important to them (Baron et al., 2002).

This model is based on three key variables, viz. valence, instrumentality and expectancy (hence is also known as VIE theory). Valence is the attractiveness of, or preference for, a particular outcome to the individual. Instrumentality refers to the perceived relationship between the two levels of outcomes – first and second. Expectancy is the subjective probability or belief that the individual will be able to attain a particular level of performance. Another important component of this theory is Outcome, which is usually considered as the end result or what people can expect

from their job. Two distinct levels of outcomes are: First-level outcomes that refer to the quantity / quality of output or the performance level and the Second-level outcomes are those which refer to the end result that is expected to follow the first level outcome.

According to Vroom, a multiplicative combination of valence, instrumentality and expectancy determine the motivational force of an individual. Expressed symbolically,

$$MF = E \times \Sigma [I \times V] \dots\dots\dots$$

Equation (1)

MF is the motivational force or the willingness to expend effort, V is the valence, I is the instrumentality and E is the expectancy. The implication of the multiplicative model of motivational force is that not a single variable, but all the three variables are important in determining the motivation of a person. Thus, no matter how desirable a particular outcome is (say, promotion or high grade in examination) for an individual (valence), the resultant force would be low if the individual does not believe that his working hard (a first-order outcome) would lead to the particular sought-after outcome, say, promotion, (instrumentality) or whether the individual is capable of attaining the required level of performance (expectancy).

More specifically, motivational force or the willingness to exert effort for a particular outcome is influenced by three variables: (a) valence or the perceived value of the outcome of the behavior, (b) instrumentality or the perceived correlation between one's effort and attainment of the outcome and (c) expectancy or the perceived probability that one will be able to put in the desired level of effort. If any of these factors increase, the motivation strength would also increase. But more interestingly, the reverse is also true! If any one of the factors goes down, the resultant motivational force, or the willingness to exert effort would also decrease. This explains why people are not found to put in adequate effort for even a desired outcome, if the other two factors, viz. instrumentality or expectancy are perceived to be low by the individual. In fact, according to the expectancy theory, it seems that an individual tries to intuitively solve a personal equation of his own before taking the decision of spending the amount of effort towards achieving a certain goal.

Porter and Lawler's (1968) subsequent work on expectancy theory model pointed out that an individual's motivation to complete a task is affected by the reward they expect to receive for completing the task from their organizations. Porter and Lawler (1968) categorized all the possible rewards in the work situation as intrinsic and extrinsic. Intrinsic rewards are



the positive feelings that an individual experiences from completing the task that means job satisfaction, sense of achievement etc while extrinsic rewards are rewards that come from outside the individual such as bonus, commission and pay increases, promotion, foreign tour with family etc. According to them an individual's perceived attractiveness and fairness of these rewards will affect his/her motivation.

Objectives of the present study

The objectives of the present study are as follows: To find out what employees, engaged in the Technical Academic sector in India, look for from their jobs

- To determine the level of employee motivational force following Vroom's (1964) VIE model
- To determine the nature of the relationship that may exist between employee motivational force and their career success in IT Industries.

Accordingly the following null hypothesis (H_0) will be tested in the present study:

- **Hypothesis 1:** There is no relationship whatsoever between the level of employee

motivational force and the number of promotions attained by the employees in IT Industries.

METHODOLOGY

Sample

The subjects of the present study were people employed in different Information Technology Industry (n = 155) in India. In the following section a brief description of the sample of the present study is given.

Age

The age of the respondents is grouped into four categories. The First group is the Young Age group with the age between 23-30 years. The Middle Age group is the second group where age lies between 31-40 years

As shown in Exhibit 1, the age of the employees' concentrates in the Young Category, comprising 73.54% of the sample while 26.46% of the respondents belong in the Middle aged group, which indicates the fact that most of the respondents belong to Young aged group in the IT sector in India.

Exhibit 1: Percentage of Age Distribution of the Sample in IT Industries

Percentage of Sample Having	
Young (23-30 years)	Middle Aged (31-40 years)
73.54	26.46

Exhibit 2: Mean and Standard Deviation of Age (in years) in IT Industries

Age of the Sample	
Mean (in Years)	Standard Deviation
28.57	4.32

Gender

Exhibit 3: Percentage of Male and Female Distribution in IT Industries

Percentage of Respondents		
Male	Female	Total
74.84	25.16	100

As shown in Exhibit 3, almost seventy-five percent of the present sample in IT Industry is found to be male, while the rest (25 percent) are female in India.

Qualifications

In the present study, educational qualification is considered in terms of the number of years spent in completing the study. Two of educational level have been created: Group 1 is the one where respondents have 16 years of education and referring to the

technical graduates (BE/BTech) and Group 2 having 18 years of education (BE/B.Tech + MBA/PGDBA).

As shown in Exhibit 4, it is evident that the majority of the respondents (about 97.14 %) in IT Sector have 16 years of education, with only 2.58% respondents having 18 years of education which indicates the fact that most of the respondents are having a technical bachelor degree in IT Industries in India.

**Exhibit 4: Percentage of the Sample Having Different Levels of Educational Qualification (in years) in IT Sector**

Percentage of Sample Having		
B.E/B.Tech (16 years)	B.E/B.Tech+MBA/ (18 years)	PGDBA
97.41	2.58	

Exhibit 5: Mean and Standard Deviation of Educational Qualification in IT Sector

Educational Qualification of the Sample	
Mean (in Years)	16.05
Standard Deviation	0.17

Work Experience

The years of service or experience of the respondents are categorized in to five groups: Group 1: 6 months-2 Years, Group 2: 2.5-5 Years, Group 3: 6-10 years and Group 4 represents people with more than 10 years of experience.

As it is seen in the Exhibit 6, in IT Industry the highest number of respondents (37.41%) falls under Group 2 followed by Group 3 (30.32%). Group 1 has only 22.58% of the respondents while only 9.67% people are left in Group 4 with more than ten years of experience. The average experience of the respondents in IT sector is almost five years (Exhibit 7), in India.

Exhibit 6: Percentage of the Sample Having Different Levels of Experience (Years of Service) in IT Industries

Percentage of Sample Having			
0.6-2 Years	2.5-5 Years	5.5-10 Years	10+ Years
22.58	37.41	30.32	9.67

Exhibit 7: Mean and Standard Deviation of Experience (Years of Service) in IT Industries

Experience of the Sample	
Mean (in Years)	5.26
Standard Deviation	3.65

Employee Tenure in the present Job (in Years)

In the IT Industry the largest number of people (49.03%) is found to have a maximum of two years of tenure in their present job (Exhibit 8) while 38.06% of the respondents are found to have up to five years of

tenure in the present job, though employees continuing with their job for more than five years are found to relatively less (12.91%). The average employee tenure in the IT Industry is found to be around three years only (Exhibit 9).

Exhibit 8: Percentage of the Sample Having Different Tenure (in Present Job) in IT Sector

Percentage of Sample Having Tenure in the Present Job of		
0.6-2 Years	2.5-5 Years	5+ Years
49.03	38.06	12.91

Exhibit 9: Mean and Standard Deviation of Tenure (in the Present Job) of the sample in Academic Sector

Tenure in the Present Job of the Sample	
Mean (in Years)	3.03
Standard Deviation	2.15

**Number of Promotions (Attained in last 5 Years)**

The number of promotions of the respondents are categorized in to five groups: Group 1: no promotions, Group 2: 1 promotion, Group 3: 2 promotions, Group 4 represents 3 promotions and Group 5 people with 4 promotions.

As shown in Exhibit 10, the largest number of people (37.41%) in the IT Industry is found to achieve only 1 promotion in their career, while only 8% of

people are found to have attained no promotion. The percentage of employees attaining either two or three promotions is found to be 18 and 13 respectively. However, the percentage of employees attaining up to four promotions is not too low (approximately 23% of the respondents in the present study). The average number of promotions in the IT sector is found to be around 2 which seems to indicate a healthy trend (Exhibit 11).

Exhibit 10: Percentage of the Sample Having Different Number of Promotions in IT Sector

Percentage of Number of Promotions of the Sample				
No Promotions	One Promotion	Two Promotions	Three Promotions	Four promotions
8.38	37.41	18.06	13.54	22.58

Exhibit 11: Mean and Standard Deviation of Number of Promotions in IT Sector

Number of Promotions of the Sample	
Mean (in Years)	2.03
Standard Deviation	1.33

Tool

'What People Want from Their Job', a standardized 14-item questionnaire by Pareek (2002) was followed to identify employees' valence for different job outcomes along with an Personal Information Sheet that records the respondents' the details of demographic data (viz. gender, age in years, educational qualifications, years of service, tenure in present job in years, number of promotions attained in last five years.)

After thus identifying the priority of the different organizational outcomes for the employees, they were then asked to answer the following two questions to determine the other two components of the Expectancy theory model, viz. instrumentality and expectancy:

- What, according to you, is the relationship between your present level of performance and the attainment of these outcomes?
- What, according to you, is your chance of putting in your 100% effort in your job?

Method of Data Collection

The questionnaire was administered individually to the each of the subjects of the present study and their responses to the questionnaire items were duly recorded.

Statistical Tools

The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 19 was utilised to analyse the data in. The upper level of statistical significance for null hypothesis testing was set at 5%

FINDINGS OF THE PRESENT STUDY**Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation of Employee Motivational Force (as determined by the Multiplicative Model)**

Employee Motivational Force (n = 155)	
Mean	61.42
Standard Deviation	21.24

Table 2: Pearson Correlation Coefficient between Employee Motivational Force and Number of Promotions Attained by the Employee on the Present Job (n = 155)

Variables	df	Correlation Coefficient
1. Employee Motivational Force	153	0.581**
2. Number of Promotions Attained		

** p < 0.000



As is evident from Table 2 above, there exists a significant positive relationship between Employee

Motivational Force and the number of promotions attained by them in their current job.

Table 3: ANOVA to Identify Differences in Employee Motivational Force based on Employee Number of Promotions in IT Industries

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	25763.245	4	6440.811	22.077	.000
Within Groups	43762.034	150	291.747		
Total	69525.278	154			

As evident from the Table 7.2.i.B, between groups variability due to number of promotion is 4 while the within group variability arising due to random error is 150. The F value is 22.077 ($p < 0.000$). Therefore we can say that a significant difference lies between employee motivational forces based on different number of promotions of the employees in IT Industries.

** $p < 0.01$

Thus it is evident that there is a significant difference between the motivational forces of the employees attaining different number of promotions in their job.

DISCUSSION

Table 1 shows the mean and standard deviation of employee motivational force, as determined by the multiplicative model. This seems to indicate that employees engaged in the Information Technology sector in India are only moderately motivated. One of the most possible reasons behind this could very well be the relatively less scope for promotions in their job, average number of promotions attained by the employees being 2 (refer to Exhibit 11) which means the average number of promotion is not very bad in last five years as per our study. The resultant frustration seems to be reflected in the high level of employee turnover prevalent in this sector with the average tenure being as less as 3 years only (refer to Exhibit 9). Usually in the IT sector, the number of promotions freezes after a level, as the organizational structure in the IT sector is predominantly flatter, with few hierarchical levels, thus restricting growth beyond a point and employees' hands on experience, rather than formal education, matter most in career growth.

The next phase of the present study aimed at checking the possible impact of number of promotions attained by the individual employees on their levels of motivational force, as determined by the VIE model of employee motivation and according to Equation 1. The findings of the present study shows a significant ($p < 0.00$) positive relationship between employee motivation and the number of promotions attained by the employees in their current job (refer to Tables 2 and 3). Therefore we can say that there is a significant

difference between employee motivational forces and the number of promotions attained by them at IT Industries. Highly motivated employees indeed do put more effort to their job, which enables them to achieve greater number of promotions. The policies in the IT sector in general are usually crafted more carefully to ensure employees' career growth and advancement as employee retention is considered as one of the major challenges in this highly competitive market environment.

Results of the present study thus indicate a statistically significant and direct correlation existing between promotion and motivation. Thus, the findings of the present study seem to reject Null Hypothesis 2, viz. there is no relationship whatsoever between the level of employee motivation and the number of promotions attained by the employees. Accordingly, we find the support for the alternative hypothesis, i.e. the higher the level of employee motivation, the higher the chances of career success in both the sectors, i.e. IT sector.

The existing research seems to support the present finding. Robbins (2001) asserts that promotions create the opportunity for personal growth, increased levels of responsibility and an increase in social standing, growth and job satisfaction. It is indeed a part of performance evaluation process where an employee is provided with an opportunity for growth and development according to his or her abilities, skills and work. A number of researchers are of the opinion that job satisfaction as well as motivation is strongly related to opportunities for promotion (Pergamit & Veum, 1999; Peterson et al., 2003; Scalfane, 1999).

As noted earlier, opportunity for promotion or growth is one of the most coveted outcomes that an employee might seek from his organization. Available research in this area has also indicated a strong linkage between employee motivation and their willingness to stay in the job for a longer period of time (Houkes et al, 2003; Stumpf and Dawley, 1981). Porter and Lawler (1968) had also noted that if employees' needs (of which promotion is a significant one), are not adequately met in the organization, this would decrease



their motivational force considerably, and in turn, the organization might very well lose the employee.

The existence of a significant positive relationship between number of promotions attained by the employees and their levels of motivational force, as is found in the present study, seems to account for the lack of motivation in this particular sector that has been traditionally linked with employee attrition rates. So the present findings may be seen to provide a valuable insight into the retention policy of the valued employees in an organization.

CONCLUSION

Organisations across the board are conceding to the noteworthy opportunity to improve the return on investments in their human resources, by aligning strategies for employee motivation with business strategy and enhancing the value delivered to and by employees. This has been identified as critical to the ability of the organisation to firstly attract, but also most importantly retaining critical skills and adding to the organisation's competitiveness in the global market.

So how employees are motivated and that the organisational strategies developed should be cognoscente of the fact that the strategies should have an important motivational impact on the employees of the organization and help to retain and sustain the valuable assets of the firm.

Recommendations and Scope of Future Research

For any organization it is almost impossible to change the preference for various organizational outcomes (the valence) for any particular employee but what the organization could aim for is to strengthen the perception of instrumentality through revising the organizational policies and bringing in more transparency in the system. Another one important thing that the organization should also attempt is to enhance the feeling of self-efficacy of the employees through proper exposure, experience to handle difficult and challenging projects and providing with adequate training to enhance their skill level and expertise for further growth and development.

The results of this study have shown a remarkable leading factor in assessing the contribution the selected factor (number of promotions) on employee motivational force. However, this study is limited in the selected IT industries in India. So the external validity of the results may be limited. Factor such as organizational (Brand), personal, occupational and cultural elements, job characteristics, and demographic variables apart from number of promotions or possibility for career success that may

influence employee motivation should be explored for further research.

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