Historical and Contemporary Perspectives on Motivation

Grand theories of motivation

Psychologists have been attempting to figure out what inspires people to act the way they do for decades. The three grand theories of psychological motivation can be used to answer this question. Motivation is the psychological concept that explains why people behave the way they do. Motivation, according to a psychologist, is what drives people to do things, whereas a lack of motivation prevents them from doing things. We will look at the three primary grand theories of motivation in this study.

Will

Will is a psychological ability in general; it is essential in philosophy as one of the elements of the mind, along with reasoning and awareness. Because of its role in facilitating intentional action, it is considered important to the study of ethics.

Psychologists were not the only ones who are curious about what drives people to behave in certain ways. Philosophers have been attempting to understand why people react in the way they do since before psychology existed. Rene Descartes is credited with developing the first grand theory of motivation.

Moral responsibility, praise, guilt, sin, and other judgments that always relate to activities that are freely chosen are all directly tied to the concept of free will. Advice, persuasion, discussion, and prohibition are all concepts associated with it. Traditionally, only free-willed activities have been considered worthy of praise or censure. Some of the most long-running philosophical and religious controversies concern whether free will holds true, what it really is, and what it means if it does. Some people define free will as the ability to act without regard for external influences or desires.

Descartes and others concentrated on the concept of free will, or the power to choose options. Will, if it means being able to make our own judgments, takes precedence over any impulses we may have. According to the first grand theory, behaviors are the consequence of deliberation and decision.

According to the philosopher Descartes, there is one infinite substance that, because to its complete freedom of choice, can make anything (Descartes, 2000). According to him, this ethereal being is the reason for the creation of free and autonomous substances like thoughts. Though Descartes considers that individuals, are naturally free, he claims that they must not see their ability to be free as being on par with the freedom of this substance, or God (Astore, 2016).

According to Astore (2016), this is due to the fact that God, as their cause, is at least as great as their existence, since it comes before them. As a result, one can deduce that Descartes believes God is more flawless than people, and that God's traits are therefore more strong than theirs, leading one to assume that God is likewise more free than people. Despite the fact that this appears to be the case, Descartes contends that persons are self-contained beings with qualities, as substances. As a result, he comes to the conclusion that people do have free will, and that this ability is just one of many qualities or mental capacities that people have. Descartes hoped that once he grasped the concept of will, he would be able to grasp motivation as well.

The reason for failure

The first grand theory's major flaw is obvious: humans frequently act unreasonably. A person's choice of a logical option is sometimes more rational. However, he or she may not choose that since he or she considers all of her options and choose the most satisfactory one. Something else is driving her here.

The will theory ended in failure as a grand theory of motivation for the following reasons: it was enigmatic and difficult to describe, much like the motivation it was supposed to inspire.

Instinct

The second grand theory appeared after the first grand theory. It is stated that we are motivated by instinct, or animalistic desires that guide our actions, rather than by will. Much of animal behavior appeared to Darwin to be unlearned, mechanized, and mechanistic. Animals adjusted to their surroundings, whether they had prior experience or not. Darwin postulated the instinct to explain this seemingly pre-wired adaptive behavior (Darwin, 1872).

According to Beach (1955), Darwin's triumph was that his motivating notion could explain what the philosopher's will could not, and that is where motivation came from in the first place. Instincts were physically real since they came from a physical substance, the genetic inheritance. The animal's behavior was influenced by this inherent and material substance (genes). Motivation research moved away from philosophy and the humanities and towards physiology and science.

William James was the first psychologist to promote the instinct theory of motivation (1890). James drew extensively on Darwin's and his contemporaries' intellectual climates to provide humans with a plethora of physical and mental instincts. Animals acquired an origin that provided them with adaptive urges to act and the reactions required to carry out that purposeful activity through Instinct. William McDougall (1908) presented an instinct theory based on instincts to explore, fight, nurture infants, and so on, a generation after James. Instincts, according to McDougall, are irrational and impulsive motivational impulses that steer a person toward a specific objective.

Charles Darwin's theory of evolution influenced the second grand theory, which was further expanded by William James and William McDougall's work. When it comes down to it, animal impulses that emerge instinctively and control our behavior are predicated on the assumption that humans are little more than animals. As a result, whereas the first grand theory was all about willpower and behaving intelligently, the second grand theory claimed that we are simply animals acting on our impulses.

The reason for failure

One of the biggest flaws in the second grand theory is that it disregards the reality that people can make decisions and overcome inclinations. A person, for example, can choose not to do something even though he wants to do it.

The instinct is no longer used in modern psychology to explain complicated human behavior. The relationship between psychology and instinct theory began with unconditional acceptance and ended with rejection. Psychology has abandoned the instinct in the same way that it has abandoned the will. Nonetheless, it is an incontrovertible observation that nonhuman animals exhibit regular, unlearned, stereotyped patterns of behavior.

Drive

The first grand theory credited humans with logically designing their own behaviors far too much. The second big theory proceeded in the opposite direction, giving people insufficient control over their instincts. Without denying free will, we can not accept human instincts. Then there comes the third set of grand theories, those people who believe in drive.

Introduced by Woodworth in 1918, drive emerged as a motivational theory to complement instinct. Drive evolved from a practical ecology that recognized that behavior's job was to meet biological requirements. Animals emotionally viewed bodily deficits as "drive" as natural balances occurred such as shortage of food, water, or sleep. Whatever conduct was necessary to meet the body's demands such as food, drinking, approach etc. was motivated by drive.

A physiological need is a drive. People's actions are guided by the motivation to satisfy physical demands, according to the third grand theory of motivation. Sigmund Freud (1915) proposed the word "drive theory", claiming that our instincts generate energy. This energy induces anxiety, prompting us to act in a way that satisfies the urge while reducing the energy. The goal of drive theory is to always return to homeostasis. He felt that all action was motivated by a desire to be met, and that the aim of activity was to fulfill that need.

Drive, according to Hull (1943), is a pooled energy source made up of all existing body shortfalls and disturbances. In other words, a total body need is the aggregate of individual demands for food, water, procreation, rest, and so on. Drive had a solely physiological basis for both Hull and Freud, and physical need was the main motivational factor. Hull's drive theory had one unique property that no other motivation theory had ever had before. That is it could anticipate motivation before it happened.

<u>The reason for failure</u>

Both of these drive theories were based on three key assumptions: (a) drive arose from physiological requirements, (b) drive powered behavior, and (c) drive decrease was reinforcing and resulted in learning. Empirical investigations of these three assumptions in the 1950s indicated both confirmation and drawbacks.

Over time, it became evident that motivational scientists needed to broaden their intellectual horizons beyond the grand theory of drive.

Mini theories

Mini-theories, in contrast to grand theories that attempt to explain the entire spectrum of motivation, focus on a single motivational phenomenon. Mini-theories attempt to comprehend or examine a single motivational occurrence, specific circumstances that influence motivation, specific groups of people, or a theoretical subject. Some, but not all, motivated behavior is explained by a mini-theory.

Mini-theories are brief descriptions of a specific aspect of development. A mini-theory could explain relatively specific actions, such as the formation of self-esteem or early childhood sociability. These theories are frequently based on grand theories, although they do not attempt to describe and explain all aspects of human behavior and development (Cvencek et al., 2016).

The following is a list of some of the mini-theories that developed in the 1960s and 1970s (each with a seminal reference):

- Achievement motivation theory (Atkinson, 1964)
- Attributional theory of achievement motivation (Weiner, 1972)
- Cognitive dissonance theory (Festinger, 1957)
- Effectance motivation (Harter, 1978a; White, 1959)
- Expectancy × value theory (Vroom, 1964)
- Flow theory (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975)
- Intrinsic motivation (Deci, 1975)
- Goal-setting theory (Locke, 1968)
- Learned helplessness theory (Seligman, 1975)
- Reactance theory (Brehm, 1966)
- Self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1977)
- Self-schemas (Markus, 1977)

Active Nature of the Person

The goal of drive theory was to explain how an animal transitioned from being inactive to becoming active (Weiner, 1990). The premise in the 1950s was that animals (particularly humans) are naturally passive, and motivation's duty was to stir the passive to become active.

Psychologists throughout the second half of the twentieth century had a different perspective. They stressed the fact that the individual was always on the go and doing something. People were born to be active and motivated. This understanding was similar to Albert Einstein's 20th-century physics insight that planets' natural state was motion (because gravitational forces were always present). Humans, like stars and planets, were subjected to constant pushes and pulls.

Charles Cofer and Mortimer Appley (1964) classified motivation theories of the time among those that assumed a passive, energy-conserving organism and those that assumed an active, growth-seeking organism in their mid-1960s assessment of motivation theories. By a factor of ten, passive-oriented depictions exceeded active-oriented ones. However, hypotheses based on an active organism began to develop.

Today's theories of motivation and emotion embrace the active organism as a basis, and they focus on growth motivations (e.g., creativity, competence, possible selves, self-actualization) rather than deficit motives (e.g., tension reduction, homeostasis, and equilibrium). The study of purpose and volition in naturally active people is the focus of modern motivation research.

Cognitive Revolution

Early motivational notions, such as drive, homeostasis, and arousal, were based on biology and physiology. The current study of motivation maintains this connection with biology, physiology, and sociobiology, but the tide switched in the early 1970s when psychology's Zeitgeist (or "intellectual climate") shifted decisively toward cognitive.

The cognitive revolution was the name given to this historical tendency. It was a time when researchers emphasized the importance of intellect, opinions, and beliefs as fundamental drivers of behavior. Motivation, like practically every other aspect of psychology, was impacted by the cognitive revolution.

Motivational principles were pushed to the background as cognitive interpretation of events took center stage in psychology. Internal mental processes became increasingly important to motivation researchers. Plans, goals, expectations, beliefs, attributions, and the self-concept were among the mentalistic motivational constructions that emerged. The cognitive revolution had two significant consequences for motivational thinking. First, cognitive components (e.g., expectations, objectives) were stressed in debates regarding motivation, while biological and environmental constructs were downplayed. These debates altered psychology's perception of human functioning, causing it to become human rather than mechanical.

Second, the cognitive revolution aided the emergence of the humanism movement. The dominant incentive theories of the 1960s were deemed dehumanizing by humanistic psychologists. Humanists are opposed to the machine metaphor, which depicts motivation as deterministic in reaction to inexorable biological forces, developmental destinies (e.g., traumatic childhood events), or environmental or societal restrictions.

Socially Relevant Questions

A third significant change brought in the mini-theories era: researchers focused on questions that were relevant to solving the motivating challenges people experienced in their lives, such as at work, school, dealing with anxiety, managing health problems, curing depression, and so on. Researchers identified a plethora of naturally produced instances of motivation outside the experiment as they examined sentient animals less and humans more. As a result, motivation researchers began to focus more on socially important, practical concerns and problems.

Weak boundary lines between motivation and allied fields are often associated with an identity crisis in motivation research, but in practice, the lack of clear lines

has aided the sharing of ideas and cultivated exposure to a variety of perspectives and methodologies, including those outside of psychology. As a result, contemporary motivation research has grown in depth, interest, and vibrancy.

The contemporary era, as it applies to motivation study

Motivation research has witnessed the growth and fall of three key modes of thinking: will, instinct, and drive. Each of these motivational conceptions received widespread acceptance, but as new information became available, each thought proved to be too restrictive for continued advancement. Each was eventually supplanted by the newly added radical notion. The study of motivation is currently in the midst of a mini-theories age. The "crisis stage" transition from drive theory to the current era of mini-theories has had both positive and negative repercussions. On the negative side, motivation was demoted from perhaps psychology's most significant discipline to a second-class discipline. The gradual decline of motivation was so complete that the field, to some extent, collapsed for a time.

Motivation was dethroned to such an extent that the field nearly collapsed for a decade and a half. The motivation research, on the other hand, did not vanish. Motivation specialists spread themselves over practically all fields of psychology, rather than disappearing. That is, motivational issues have proven to be important and relevant to nearly every field of psychology. As a result, motivation researchers formed loose alliances with academics from various fields, forming a loose network of scholars who had a common interest in and dedication to motivationally relevant issues and problems. Without employing motivational notions, learning theorists, personality psychologists, social psychologists, physicians, and others were unable to explain all of the behavior they needed to describe.

Motivational ideas such as hunger and pleasure are crucial to neuroscientists' understanding of why the brain evolved in the way it did, to the point where neuroscience must join forces with the study of motivation (Berridge, 2004). Student motivation appears to be a big topic in learning and teaching research at

the moment. Researchers looking for answers to basic concerns about how and why some kids appear to perform and flourish in school settings while others appear to struggle to build the information and cognitive resources needed to succeed academically must examine motivation (Pintrich, 2003).

The contemporary era, as it applies to emotion study

In the twenty-first century, a new paradigm for motivation research has developed, one filled with mini-theories of motivation and various voices, each of whom contributes a unique piece to the puzzle of motivation and emotion research. The current environment resembles a democracy of ideas and theories rather than a single theory. Human behavior raises a number of intricate and multifaceted topics and issues. As a result, advancement in motivation research is contingent on the field's ability to draw on a variety of viewpoints. Although the subject matter of motivation is already well defined—needs, cognitions, emotions, and external events—the field is increasingly informed and enhanced by a range of interventions that draws ideas and methodologies from a variety of fields that address the questions and problems of motivation (Pintrich, 2003).

As more and more concepts and approaches from other domains are applied to motivational issues, it is becoming clear that human motivation and emotion function on multiple levels.

Though it was formerly common practice, the days of focusing on a single motivational agent and studying it in relative isolation from the other motivational agents are completely forgotten. Some theorists suggested that the study of human motivation is the study of human wants and the dynamic processes associated to these requirements in the research of needs (Deci, 1980). Emotions, according to emotional theorists, are the basic motivation system (Tomkins, 1970).

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