

5. Motivation

5.1 The Nature of Motivation

- The word **motivation** comes from a Latin root meaning “to move” and the psychology of motivation is indeed the study of what moves us, why we do what we do.
- In other words, motivation refers to the forces that initiate and direct behaviour, and the variables that determine the intensity and persistence of that behaviour. It is concerned with factors that direct and energize the behaviour of humans and other organisms.
- When we are hungry, for example, we initiate food seeking. This initiation can be prompted from within the individual or the external environment- we might be hungry because of low blood sugar level (internal) or because we just saw a delicious dessert (external). Motivation also directs our behavior. When we are hungry we seek food rather than read a newspaper. Motivation also determines the intensity and persistence of our behavior. Intensity has to do with the strength of the behavior. For instance you might be a little hungry and if food is readily available, you would eat, but if there is no food in the immediate vicinity, you would probably engage in some other behavior. On the other hand, if you are extremely hungry, you will most likely engage intensively in food seeking behavior, doing what ever it took to obtain it. How motivated we are, still influence our persistence. Sometimes we will persist in obtaining a goal for a long time, while at other times, we'll give up after a brief time.
- An important characteristic of motives is that we never observe them directly. Psychologists often measure motivation by

observing what individuals do (initiation), how they make choices (direction), noting the strength of their behavior (Intensity) and how long they engage in them(persistence).

5.2 Some Theories of Motivation

a) Drive Theories- Push theory of motivation

- According to drive theories, when we experience a drive, we are motivated to pursue actions that will lead to drive reduction. *A drives is an internal state of tension that motivates (pushes) an organism to engage in activities that should reduce this tension.*
- In general drive theories say the following: When an internal driving state is aroused, the individual is pushed to engaged in behaviour which will lead to goal that reduces the intensity of the driving state. In human beings, at least, reaching the appropriate goal, which reduces the drive state, is pleasurable and satisfying.
- According to drive theories motivation is said to consist of
 1. a driving state
 2. the goal directed behaviour initiated by the driving state.
 3. the attainment of an appropriate goal and
 4. the reduction of the driving state and subjective satisfaction and relief when the goal is reached. After a time the driving state builds up again to push behaviour toward the appropriate goal. This sequence of events is sometimes called the *motivational cycle*.

b) Incentive Theories- Pull theory of motivation

- This theory suggests that motivation is not primarily a matter being pushed from within by various urges; rather, it is more a

question of being pulled from without by expectations of attaining desired outcomes (incentives).

- Incentive theories appear to explain why many people engage in complex effortful or even painful behaviours such as working many hours on their jobs, or studying long into the night.
- Incentive theory has been applied to many aspects of human motivation. Perhaps, though, it has found its most important practical use with respect to work motivation- the tendency to expend energy and effort on one's job.

c) Opponent Process Theory

- The opponent process theory takes a *hedonistic view of motivation*. Basic to this theory is the observation that many emotional-motivational states are followed by *opposing, or opposite states*.
- Opponent process theory of motivation seeks to explain the motivation behind such phenomena as *drug addiction* and the *psychological and emotional reactions* that occur as a result of extremes of physical danger, as in skydiving.
- According to this theory, stimuli that first produce increases in arousal later produce an opposite calming reaction in the nervous system, where as stimuli that first produce decreases in arousal later produce an increase in arousal. Moreover, with each exposure to a stimulus, the original response to the stimulus remains fairly stable or perhaps even declines, while the opponent process- the reaction to the original response- tends to grow in strength.
- In sum, opponent process theory helps explain why people hold strong motivation for behaviour that on the surface has few benefits. It is frequently the opponent process not the initial

reaction, which maintains the motivation to carry out such behaviour.

d) Arousal theories/ optimal level theories/just right theories

- Arousal theories seek to explain behaviour in which the goal is *the maintenance of or an increase in excitement*. These theories say that there is a certain *optimal, or best level of arousal* that is pleasurable.
- According to arousal theory, each of us tries to maintain a certain level of stimulation activity. As with the drive reduction model, if our stimulation and activity levels become too high, we try to reduce them. But the arousal model also suggests something quite different from the drive reduction model: If the levels of stimulation and activity are too low, we will try to increase them by seeking stimulation.
- Arousal theory has significant applications to a variety of fields. For example, students who are highly anxious while taking tests on complex material may perform well below their ability because of their high level of arousal.

d) Maslow's Hierarchy: Motivational Needs

- Abraham Maslow, a prominent humanistic theorist, proposes that human motives are organized into a hierarchy of needs, a systematic arrangement of needs according to priority, which *assumes that basic needs must be met before less basic needs are aroused*.
- Maslow's model considers different motivational needs to be ordered in a hierarchy, and it suggests that before more sophisticated, higher order needs can be met, certain primary needs must be satisfied.
- The model can be conceptualized as a pyramid in which the more basic needs are at the bottom and the higher levels needs are at the top.

- The most basic needs are those described as *primary drives*: needs for water, food, sleep, sex and the like. In order to move up the hierarchy, the person must have these basic **physiological needs** met.
- **Safety needs** come next in the hierarchy; Maslow suggests that people need a safe, secure environment in order to function actively. Safety needs reflect concern about long-term survival.
- Safety and security needs motivate adults to seek a stable job, to buy insurance, and to put money in their savings accounts.
- Physiological and safety needs compose the lower order needs. Only when the basic lower order needs are met can a person consider fulfilling higher order needs, consisting of **love and belongingness, esteem and self-actualization**.
- **Love and belongingness needs** include the need to obtain and give affection and to be a contributing member of some group or society. After these needs are fulfilled the person strives for **esteem**.
- In Maslow's thinking **esteem** relates to the need to develop a sense of self worth by knowing that others are aware of one's competence and value. People with esteem needs become concerned about their achievement, and the recognition and the recognition respect and status that they earn.
- Once these four sets of needs are fulfilled- no easy task- the person is ready to strive for the higher level need, **self-actualization**.
- **Self-actualization** is a state of self-fulfillment in which people realize their highest potential. The important thing in self-actualization is that people feel at ease with themselves and satisfied that they are using their talents to the fullest.

- In a sense, reaching self-actualization produces a decline in the striving and yearning for greater fulfillment that marks most people's lives and instead provides a sense of satisfaction with the current state of affairs.

5.3 Classification of Motives

- Motives can be divided into three major categories:

1. Primary / Biological /Physiological Motives

- These motives are, to a large extent, rooted in the physiological state of the body.
- Primary motives are innate in nature and must be met for survival.
- The most important primary motives include hunger, pain avoidance, a need for oxygen, sleep, elimination of wastes, and regulation of body temperature.
- Many biological motives are triggered, in part, by departures from balanced physiological conditions of the body. The body tends to maintain a state of equilibrium called *homeostasis* in many of its internal physiological processes.

2. Stimulus Motives: Motives to know and to be effective

- These are motives to
 - seek *variety in stimulation*,
 - *process information* about the world around us,
 - *explore and to be effective in mastering challenges* from the environment.
- The purpose of stimulus motives seems to be to provide the nervous system with useful information and stimulation.
- The stimulus motives cause the individual to seek out sensory stimulation through interaction with the environment. They include activity, curiosity, exploration, manipulation, and physical contact.

- Because these motives are so persistent and seem to exist to one degree or another in everyone they are often considered innate, part of the human species heritage. In a sense, these motives are behind our greatest human accomplishments and also, unfortunately, our greatest failure.

3. Social Motives

- Social motives are the complex motive states, or needs that are the sources of many human actions.
- They are called social because they are learned in *social groups*, especially in the family as children grow up and because they usually involve *other people*.
- These human motives can be looked upon as general states that lead to many particular behaviours. Not only do they help to determine much of what a person does, they persist never fully satisfied, over the years. No sooner is one goal reached than the motive is directed toward another one.
- Thus, social motives are general persisting characteristics of a person, and since they are learned, their strength differs greatly from one individual to another.
- Consequently, social motives are important components of personality.
- Many social motives have been proposed. Some of these include needs for achievement, affiliation, power, approval, status, security, and aggression.

5.4 Frustration

- The term **frustration** refers to the blocking of any goal directed behaviour. If motives are frustrated, or blocked, emotional feelings and behaviour often result. People who cannot achieve their important goals feel depressed, fearful, anxious, guilty, or

angry. Often they are simply unable to derive ordinary pleasure from leaving.

5.4.1 Sources of Frustration

- **Environmental forces:** Environmental factors can frustrate the satisfaction of motives by making it difficult or impossible for a person to attain a goal.
- **Personal inadequacies:** Setting unattainable goals can be important sources of frustration. People are often frustrated because they aspire to goals- have a level of aspiration- beyond their capacity to perform.
- **Conflict of motives:** Conflict exists whenever a person has incompatible or opposing goals. The frustration comes from being unable to satisfy all the goals. Whatever goal the person decides to satisfy, there will be frustration, most likely preceded by turmoil, doubt, and vacillation.
- Of the three general sources of frustration described above the one that often produces the most persistent and deep-seated frustration in many individuals is motivational conflict. There are about four basic kinds of motivational conflicts.

1. Approach- Approach Conflict

- Occurs when one is simultaneously/ equally attracted to two or more desirable goals/ outcomes.
- Generally, such conflicts cause little distress and are easily resolved. The reason is that although we must choose one alternative now, we can often obtain the other at a later time.

2. Avoidance- Avoidance Conflict:

- This conflict occurs when we are motivated to avoid each of two (or more) equally unattractive choices, but must choose one.
- Avoidance- avoidance conflicts tend to involve a great deal of vacillation and hesitation. Moving closer to one of the unattractive choices increases our discomfort and leads us to retreat. This

retreat brings us closer to the other unattractive alternative, and we retreat in the opposite direction.

3. Approach avoidance conflict

- This kind of conflict occurs when a person is motivated to both approach and avoid the same goal.
- In these kinds of conflicts both attraction and repulsion are typically strongest when you are nearest the goal.
- The closer you are to something appealing, the stronger your desire to approach it; the closer you are to something unpleasant, the stronger your desire to flee.
- As with avoidance-avoidance conflicts, vacillation is common in these conflicts. Often however the negative valence is not repellent enough to stop the approach behaviour.
- In such cases people reach the goal but much more slowly and hesitantly than they would have without the negative valence; until the goal is reached there is frustration.
- Even after the goal is reached, an individual may feel uneasy because of the negative valence attached to it.
- Wherever a person is frustrated by not reaching it at all, emotional reactions such as fear, anger, and resentment commonly accompany approach avoidance conflicts.

4. Multiple approach-avoidance conflicts

- Such conflicts are the ones we most often face in life. These involve situations in which several options exist, with each one containing both positive and negative elements.
- Not surprisingly these are the hardest to resolve and the most stressful.