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## The role of traditional Motivation theories on employee retention

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### ABSTRACT

*Retention through motivation is one of a critical success factor of an organization. The primary objective of this study is to provide an assemblage of traditional motivation theories that influence employee retention. This study discusses the significance of motivation on employee retention. This study also provides a retention model based on motivation theories to enhance employee retention. The proposed framework could be used to warrant further research in the area of employee retention and employee motivation.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Employee retention, need theory, expectancy theory, equity theory, and job design model.*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Employee retention is not merely a common practice of an organization; it is one of primary concern of an organization. The myriad hitches initiated the significance of employee retention. According to Das & Baruah (2013, p.8) "encouraging employees to remain in the organization for a long period can be termed as employee retention." Retention can be enhanced in abundant ways. Literature sources reveal employee retention through HRM practices ((Iyer, 2011; Kuttappa, 2013; Tangthong, Trimetsoontorn, and Rojniruntikul, 2014)), organizational practices (Nema & Nougriaya, 2015; Keenam, 2015); personal factors (George, 2015); push and pull factors (Ali Shah et al., 2010); and demographic factors (Emiroglu, Akova, Tanriverdi, 2015).

Similarly, motivation also one a significant talent retention strategy to hold employees among different retention practices. Employee motivation is one of the essential factor that can help the employer to improve employee morale and organizational performance (Sandhay & Kumar, 2011). Literature source has a vast number of motivation theories. Conversely, least piece of work has been done to understand the traditional motivation theories influence on employee retention under one roof (Ramlall, 2004; Kidwell, 2011). Ramlall (2004) claimed to identify, analyze and critique the motivation theories underlying employee retention in the organizations. Therefore, this research aim to attempt to discuss the role of traditional motivation theories on employee retention.

### 2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

Contrary causes of turnover justified the importance of the employee retention (Sandhay & Kuamr, 2011), such as loss of company information (Sandhay & Kuamr, 2011) loss of employee morale (Sandhay & Kuamr, 2011) high turnover cost (Rathi, 2010; Weinstein 2008); service interruption (Ribiero, 2011); loss of production (Everest research group, 2011); and the less talented ones

remaining with the organization (Neiderman, 2011). Moreover, the most common reasons cited by Sandhay&Kuamr (2011) are person-job fit, lack of growth opportunities, lack of appreciation, lack of trust, less support and coordination among co-workers, seniors, and management, stress from overload and work-life imbalance, compensation strategies not appropriately implemented, and new job offer. Additionally, Turnover intention leads an employee to make comparisons between the current and future jobs (Albattat&Som, 2013). Accordingly, high employee turnover induces remaining talents job search behavior.

Every organization follows some set of strategies to retain employees. Before implementing retention strategies, organizations must know what motivates an employee to continue with the organization. Numerous aspects motivate individuals. Motivation encourages efforts and eliminates negative feelings. According to Daft and Noe (2001) an individual's motivation influences enthusiasm, directs energy towards an outcome, and maintains behavior even when the behavior does not immediately result in a reward or the work environment makes it difficult to perform the behavior. Consequently, Motivation theories are used to address employee inclinations. Employee motivation is one of an essential factor that can help the employer to improve employee retention. Through motivation strategy, the employer can encourage the employees by enhancing their skills and also by improving their morale.

Motivation focuses on what needs a person is trying to fulfill and what motivation, act, or objective can be used to meet that need (Maslow, 1954; Ramlall, 2001; Ramlall, 2004). Motivation theories like Maslow's pyramid hierarchy of needs, Alderfer's ERG theory, McClelland's achievement motivation Theory, Adams' equity theory, Herzberg's job design model, Vroom's expectancy Theory, Hackman & Oldham's job characteristics model assist managers to implement effective motivation system to improve the performance of their employees (Kidwell, 2011). Leaders motivate employees and employees perform at their best levels. Dedicated employees work hard, come to work regularly and continue making positive contributions to the organization. Similarly, the business will be able to cut costs and yield more profit, both of which are the ultimate goals of any organization (Sowathbee, 2009). The literature has an abundant number of motivational theories, and the researcher discussed four motivational theories in this study. The selected theories are utmost pertinent to employee retention strategies and used to explain need and expectation of employees. These theories were selected based on the extensive research conducted by Ramlall (2001) which was followed by Kidwell (2011).

### 2.1.0 Need theories

Need means something essential for a human to live a healthy life. Human being tries to satisfy their need. Need theories argued that employees motivated by deficiencies in one or more critical needs. The four best-known need theories are Maslow's hierarchy of needs, Herzberg motivator-hygiene theory, McClelland's three needs theory and Alderfer's ERG theory. These theories are called content theories. Ramlall (2001) and Kidwell (2011) article chronicled two need theories: Maslow's Need Hierarchy Theory and McClelland's Need Theory. This paper discusses Maslow's need hierarchy theory and **Alderfer's ERG Theory since Alderfer's ERG theory was built upon Maslow's need theory.**

### 2.1.1 Maslow's Hierarchy of needs theory

People have several needs that to be satisfied. Some needs are primary (food, sleep, and water) and some are secondary (Development, achievement, and love). Needs may be broken down into two categories: physiological and psychological. Maslow's need theory includes both physiological and psychological needs with five levels. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory contends that individuals have five basic needs (Woods, 2002). The five sets of needs were divided into two categories: Basic needs and higher-order needs. The most basic human needs, represented by food, water, shelter, and safety are considered essential for human existence. Higher-order needs are linked with social activities, esteem building, and self-actualization (Redmond, 2013). First four levels deal with physiological needs: physiological, safety, love, and esteem. Level 5 deal with psychological needs that is self-actualization. Later, Maslow's (1954) five-stage model was expanded with three more stages to include cognitive, aesthetic needs, and transcendence needs (Maslow, 1970).

Cognitive need at stage five includes the need for knowledge and meaning. Stage six is known as aesthetic needs. On this stage people appreciate beauty. Stage seven discuss self-actualization needs. The ultimate stage on the revised hierarchy was transcendence needs. People reached this highest stage help others to become self-actualized (McLeod, 2013). Maslow arranged needs like a pyramid with a fundamental need at the bottom and self-actualization at the top.

**Figure 2.1 Maslow's triangle**



Source: Adapted from Conscious aging Institute (2011)

Maslow's hierarchy triangle assemble needs in order. Similarly, Physiological needs are dominant compared to other needs. Berl, Williamson,& Powell (2013) asserts that Maslow's theory based on three assumptions. First, people satisfy lower-order needs before moving on to the next level in the hierarchy. Second, unsatisfied needs stimulate behavior needs to range from the very basic to the more complex" as quoted in Hartel et al. (2007). However, the implication of this theory helps managers to design motivational tool based on the level of required need. Motivation depends on the personal need, and satisfied need is no longer be an effective motivator.

Intangible and tangible, internal/external characteristics and rewards of a physical environment, work culture, self and other relationships, and leadership skill set of those in the organization are some of the factors that determine individual work motivation (Moody et al., 2006). Also, each need is satisfied the person moves up a level (Owston, 2013). Therefore, Ramlall (2001) suggest managers devise programs or practices aimed at satisfying emerging or unmet need of employees. Moreover, employee needs decide the level of performance and behavior. People who have achieved the highest level are self-actualized. They solve problems for themselves and others. Once the organization fails to fulfill these fundamental layers, it develops stress and depresses to strive towards excellence. Hence, an employer must fulfill all the levels of needs to enhance employee retention.

### 2.1.2 Alderfer's ERG Theory

Another need theory built upon Maslow's need theory was ERG Theory developed by Yale Psychologist Clayton Alderfer. ERG Theory-E stands for Existence R-for Relatedness and G-for Growth. The ERG theory attempt to improve Maslow's needs hierarchy by allowing more flexibility of movement among human need. Moreover, Alderfer reduced levels and permitted flexibility in the order of the needs. Needs are classified into three categories:

- 1. Existence Needs:** Physiological and safety needs (e.g., the most concrete needs such as food, shelter, and water).
- 2. Relatedness Needs:** Social relationships and external esteem (e.g., family involvement, friends, and co-workers)
- 3. Growth Needs:** Internal esteem and self-actualization (e.g., craving to be innovative) (Redmond, 2013)

ERG theory says that human needs should be fulfilled simultaneously and not in any specific order. Management must aim to satisfy immediate or unmet need to enhance job satisfaction. "Managers are need to develop appropriate climate in which employees can develop to their fullest potential. Failure can leads to employee frustration and could result in poorer performance, increased dis satisfaction, and increased turnover intention from the organization" (Steers & Porter, 1983, p.32).

The central difference between Maslow's need hierarchy and Alderfer's ERG Theory was the order in which needs are met. Alderfer's theory slightly differs from Maslow's theory as there is no rigid hierarchy of needs. Alderfer believed that needs are met simultaneously and in no specific order, while Maslow's theory states that needs are met one by one and in a specific order (Alleydog, 1998). Besides, higher-level needs are ungratified, and individuals increase their

desire of gratification of lower-level needs. Moreover, Alderfer's ERG theory is a "starving artist," who may place greater emphasis on creating art (growth) than on existence needs like food or shelter (Redmond, 2010). However, Maslow's Need theory and Alderfer's Theory suggests managers design motivational tools to meet employees unfulfilled needs. Furthermore, both theories explain employee needs in different stages. Even though Maslow's hierarchy of needs and Alderfer's need theories not be sufficient to explain employee needs, both theories appear to still resonate with several perceptions in employee retention (Maynard, 2002).

### 2.2.0 Equity Theory

J. Stacey Adams developed equity theory in the early 1960's. Equity theory proposes that individual motivation level can be affected by the individual's perception of fair treatment in social exchange. Similarly, a person's motivation based on what he or she considers to be fair when compared to others (Redmond, 2010). Similarly, a person's beliefs in regards to what is fair and what is not fair can affect their motivation, attitude, and behavior. Equity theory rests on two assumptions about human behavior. First, it assumes that individuals engage in the process of evaluating their social relationship much as they would evaluate economic transaction in the marketplace. Second, it assumes that people do not assess the equity of exchange in a vacuum. Instead, they compare their situation with those of others to determine the relative balance (Brandino, 2002). Equity theory helps to explain why highly paid union workers go on strike when no one else but the members understands why millionaire athletes feel that they are underpaid and failed to realize they make enough money (Redmond, 2013).

Equity theory helps to explain why pay and conditions alone do not determine motivation. Adam's theory based on two aspects: inputs (contributions by an individual like abilities, effort, performance, age, seniority, education, and other attributes) and outcomes (pay, benefits, status symbols, and even intrinsic rewards) (Adams, 1963). The ratio of inputs and outputs must be equal to get fair balance. The most important outcomes of Adams's theory likely to be seen in the area of pay with outcomes such as fringe benefits, job assignments, supervisory treatment, and status symbols (Ramlall, 2001). It is common when two people exchange something one or both will feel that the exchange was inequitable. Notably, this is the case common when an individual exchange his services for pay (Adams, 1963).

On the contrary, an imbalance between inputs and outputs raises tension and results in a turnover decision. However, it is significantly difficult to determine the exact components due to their subjective nature (Siegel, Schraeder, & Morrison, 2007).

Therefore, well-defined reward eliminates disparity situations and negative consequences (Kidwell, 2011). Equity theory depends on not only input and output but also a comparison of a ratio between efforts and benefits. Equity theory insists organization to follow equal ratio among employees to reduce tension. Unequal ratio creates grievance and demotivates employees which makes changes in employee behavior. Equity theory suggests that individuals compare their contributions (e.g., skills, performance) and outcomes (e.g., pay, promotions and supervision). Individuals who feel that they have been "underpaid," or "not promoted," relative to others will be distressed and will attempt to resolve the inequity through behavioral or psychological changes (John, Michael & Emmanuel, 2005).

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It is vital to consider Adam's equity theory when striving to improve employee's job satisfaction and motivation. Fair treatment between performance and pay delivers high job satisfaction and maximize stay intention. A fairly treated employee fees satisfied with his job (McIntyre et al., 2002; Rifai, 2005; Paik, Parboteeah, & Shim, 2007; Lambert, Hogan, & Barton, 2007; Deconinck & Bachmann, 2007).

### 2.3.0 Expectancy theory

The expectancy theory of motivation also labeled as a process theory. Expectancy theory discusses how employees are motivated to receive an expected outcome. Expectancy theory claimed that people are motivated to get desired outcome (Redmond, 2010). Moreover, employee motivation depends on the perceived association between performance and outcomes. Similarly, employee behavior based on the calculation of anticipated outcome (Chen & Miller, 1994; Fang, 2008). An employee attempt to satisfy the need is valuable (Lawler, Porter & Vroom, 2009). According to Werner (2002, p.335) "a person will be motivated to strive when there is a good probability of getting better outcome, which would then be instrumental in helping that person attain his/her personal goal/desire". According to the expectancy theory model proposed by Vroom, employees will not work to their full potential if they perceive that the organization does not appraise their efforts and reward them accordingly (Appelbaum, 2005).

Expectancy theory suggests that strength of an expectation decides the level of outcome. Expectancy theory is a framework for predicting or understanding which choice is most likely to be made among a set of two or more choices (Panzano et al., 2004). Expectancy theory can be very much applicable in designing reward strategies and advancement strategies. Expectancy theory urges individual differences. Managers must understand different employee's expectations and assign jobs according to the individual difference to ensure a high level of motivation. When employer fulfills employee expectations job satisfaction exists and stay intention also survive.

The two essential expectancy theories are Vroom's original expectancy theory and Porter & Lawler's extension of Vroom's theory. Vroom's expectancy theory suggests that an individual's perceived view of an outcome determine the level of motivation. According to Vroom (1964), expectancy termed as a momentary belief followed by a particular outcome. The range of expectancy can be from zero to one range from a person's subjective probability to a person's subjective certainty.

According to Vroom (1964, p.15) "people deliberately chose a particular course of action based upon perceptions, attitudes, and belief to enhance pleasure and avoid pain." Moreover, an outcome is positively valet when the person prefers to attain it. On the contrary, an outcome has zero valence when the person prefers not to attain it. Moreover, there can be a discrepancy between anticipated satisfaction from an outcome (valence) and real satisfaction from an outcome (value). Therefore, expectancy is a person's estimation of the probability that effort will lead to successful performance. This estimation or belief based on the confidence a person has in his/her capacities to bring skills to bear and influence outcomes (e.g., self-concept, self-efficacy, and the focus of control) (Seongsin, 2007). An essential contribution of expectancy theory signals that negative job performance appraisals may signal employees are unlikely to receive valued outcomes from the organization (e.g., pay raises or promotions) or get fired.

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### 2.3.1 Porter and Lawler's extension

Porter and Lawler extended Vroom's expectancy theory. Lyman Porter and Edward Lawler III developed an expectancy model of motivation which was an extension of Vroom's work. This model attempted to 1) Identify the source of people's valences and expectancies and 2) link effort with performance and job satisfaction (Kreitner & Kinicki, 1998). Job satisfaction enhanced through employees' perceptions of the equity of the rewards received (Porter & Lawler, 1968). Employees are highly satisfied with fair reward (Ramlall, 2001). Porter and Lawler also concluded that an employee's inspiration to complete a task is affected by the reward. The reward can be intrinsic (Satisfaction) or Extrinsic (Bonus, commission, and pay hike). Moreover, Porter and Lawler provide support for valence, instrumentality, and expectancy as individual components, which showed higher correlations and predictions rather than the motivational force score or the total force score (Redmond, 2010).

The implications of Vroom's expectancy theory states that people strive based on the level of bonus; reward and performance have a direct association with each other. Similarly, managers adjust reward according to the required level of performance. Moreover, Expectancies enhanced by providing proper equipment and training, demonstrating correct work procedures, explaining performance evaluation method, and listening to employee performance problems (Johns & Alan, 2010). Most managerial experts accept expectancy theory since it discusses two essential elements: 1. what causes motivation and 2. What causes performance? Besides, Expectancy theory delivers the conceptual framework to enhance motivation and performance. Similarly, expectancy theory helps to design reward system based on actual performance. Expectancy theory recognizes individual and situational differences. Therefore, high performers placed in better situations where high performance is possible (Brandino, 2002).

### 2.4.0 Job design

Job design discusses the systematic allocation of tasks between individuals and groups within an organization. Job design is one of a useful tool to motivate employees. A well-designed job provides opportunities to deal with demanding tasks, i.e., tasks that are mentally stimulating and require creativity at least some of the time (Hackman, 1980). Job enrichment and Job rotation are the two approaches that encourage accomplishing employee task. Several studies indicate job enrichment reduces costs (Emami et al., 2012). Job rotation refers employees move between different jobs periodically to reduce the monotony of their work. Job rotation develops a team with a broader range of skills. Job enrichment involves providing employees with more control over the work they do. It helps to delegate authority and responsibility, and it may encourage them to seek out better and more efficient ways to accomplish their task, leading to a potential increase in productivity.

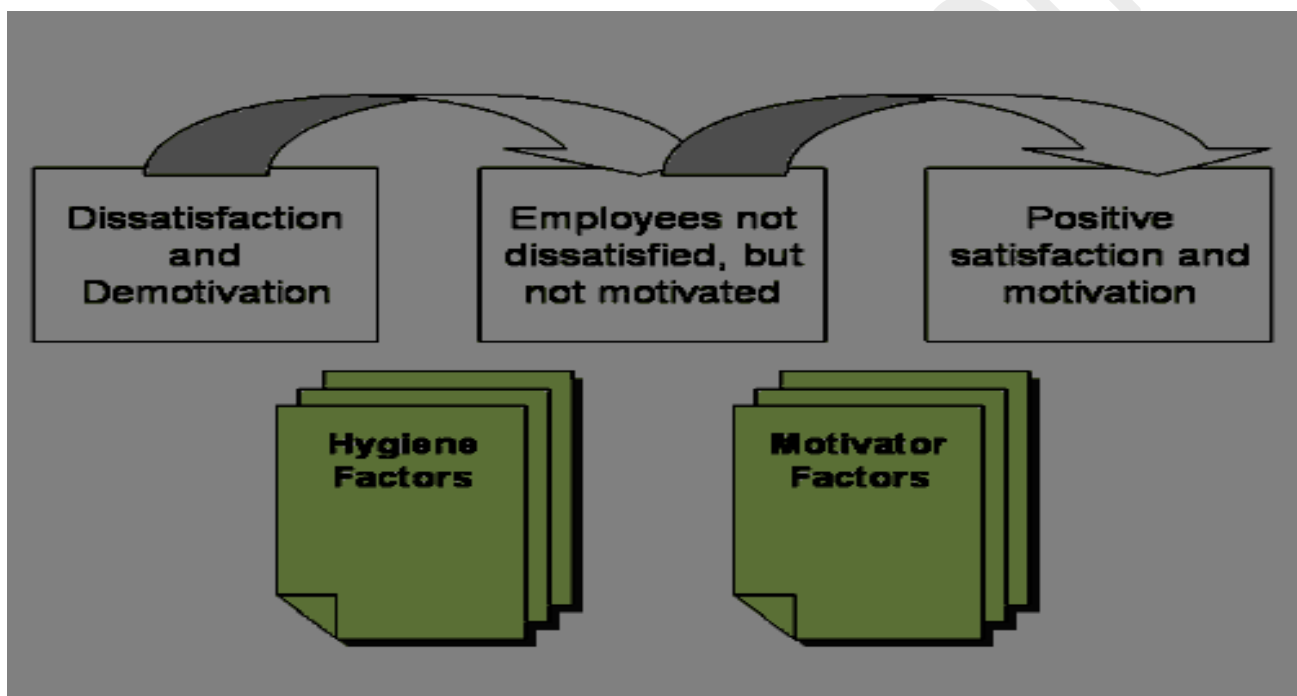
Job satisfaction also depends on nature of job an employee is assigned (Shagufta & Tariq, 2012). Well-designed job increase job satisfaction among employees and improve efficiency, productivity, and morale within the organization. In turn, this could lead to less staff turnover, absenteeism and potentially make business more profitable. Job design and its approaches have begun with scientific management in 1990's. Scientific managers such as Taylor (1947), Gilbreth (1911), and Gilbreth & Gilbreth (1917) scientifically examined jobs with various techniques. The first significant theory concerning the individual job design was Herzberg two factor theory.

### 2.4.1 Herzberg two factor theory

Herzberg two-factor theory discussed and distinguished two types of factors, namely motivators (intrinsic to the work itself- achievement, recognition, and responsibility), and hygiene factors (extrinsic to the work-work conditions, pay, and supervision) (Rastogi, 2006).

Moreover, Job enrichment was based on Herzberg's Motivation-Hygiene Model. Herzberg analyzed the job attitudes of 200 accountants and engineers and suggested a two-step approach to understand employee and their satisfaction level

**Figure: 2 Herzberg’s Job Design model.**



Source: Adapted from Riley (2012)

*Motivator includes* status, advancement, recognition, responsibility, challenging work, sense of personal achievement, and personal growth in a job (Riley, 2012). Employee motivation enhanced through some changes in the employee's job. Besides, motivation factors are not common for all employees. Different employees need a different level of motivation. Therefore, proper usage of motivation level to the employees is a challenging task for the managers.

On the other hand, hygiene factors are used to eliminate job dissatisfaction. Hygiene factors include:

- Company policy and administration
- Wages, salaries, and other financial remuneration
- Quality of supervision
- Quality of interpersonal relations
- Work conditions
- Job security feel.



Table: 1 Hygiene and Motivator factors

Hygiene factors	Motivation factors
Supervision	Achievement
Working condition	Recognition
Salary	Job satisfaction
Family	Growth
Status	Responsibility
Security	Development

Source: Developed for the study

Hertzberg's theory claimed that challenging job has more opportunity for achievement, recognition, advancement, and growth (Rastogi, 2006). Similarly, a challenging job needs additional motivation and efforts. Furthermore, a more challenging job has high employee turnover rates.

#### 2.4.2 Hackman and Oldham job characteristic model

Hackman and Oldham developed job characteristic model (JCM). JCM builds on two concepts: Motivation and satisfaction. Besides, JCM believes task itself was the key to motivate the employee. Moreover, a challenging job increase motivation whereas a tedious task suppress motivation. JCM was classified into five core job characteristics (skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback) that- impact three critical psychological states (experienced meaningfulness, experienced responsibility for outcomes, and knowledge of the actual results). The five job characters influence work outcomes like job satisfaction, low level of absenteeism, and high work motivation. Motivation potential score (MPS) is the combination of five job characteristics. MPS used to measure an employee's attitudes and behaviors (Riley, 2012). Hackman and Oldham's (1975) job characteristics model (JCM) superseded the Hertzberg two-factor theory. It classifies five core job characteristics namely:

- (1) Skill variety – Refers to required skill to do a job
- (2) Task identity – Refers the person in charge of particular piece of work from start to finish
- (3) Task significance – refers how particular person’s job affects others
- (4) Autonomy – refers to the degree of freedom to do a job and
- (5) Feedback – refers to the point to know how people are productive at work.

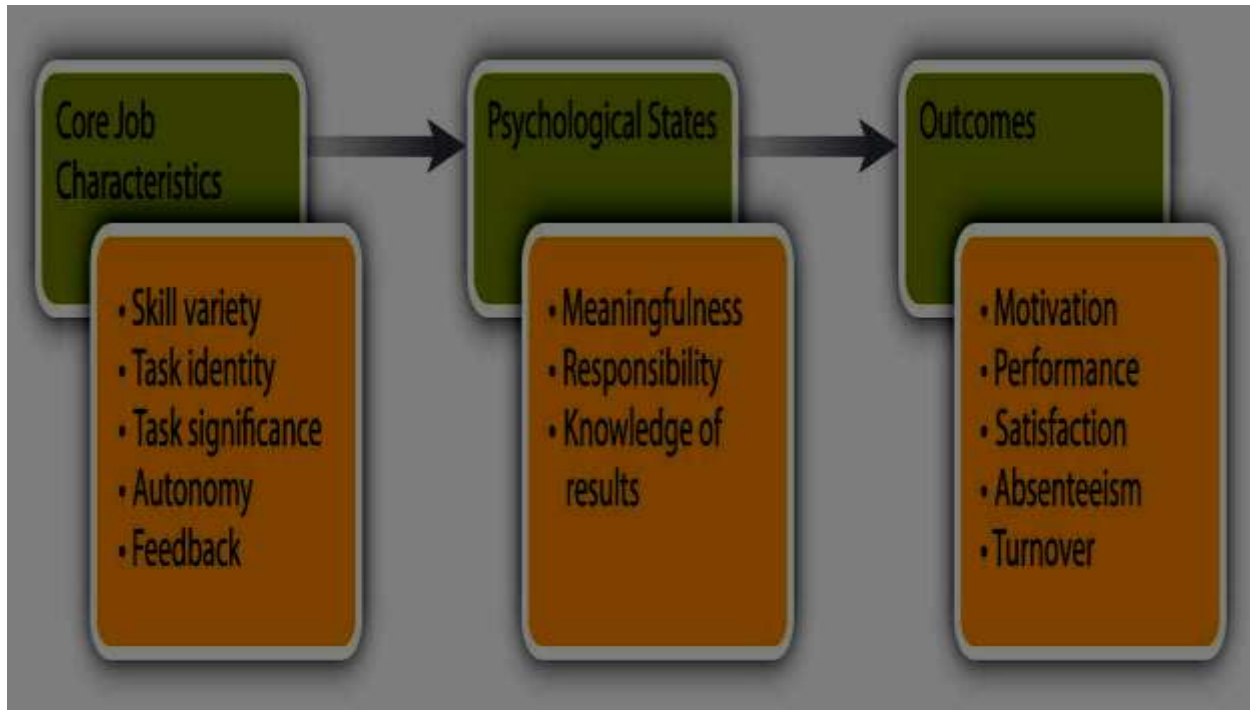
Hackman and Oldham's model five characteristics will not have uniform effects. The five core job characteristics are combined to form the motivating potential score (MPS) of the job and used as an index of how the job is to affect an employee’s attitudes and behaviors. Hackman and Oldham's proposed the following formula to calculate the motivating potential of a given job equation:

$$\text{MPS} = (\text{Skill variety} + \text{Task identity} + \text{Task significance}) \div 3 \times \text{Autonomy} \times \text{Feedback}$$

Hackman and Oldham's proposed autonomy and feedback are the more important elements in deciding motivation potential compared to other characters like skill variety, task identity, or task significance (New Charter University, 2013). Jobs that need additional motivation potential must

be high on at least one of the three factors and also must be high on both autonomy and feedback. A high MPS job deliver motivation, performance, and job satisfaction and eliminate negative outcomes like absenteeism and turnover(Steel & Piers, 2012).

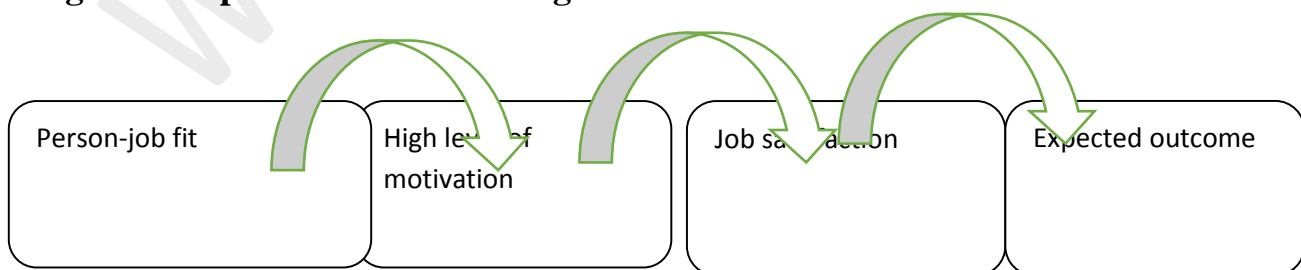
**Figure: 3 Five core dimensions of Job characteristics model.**



Source: Adapted from New charter University (2013)

The implication of JCM reveals that particular characteristics of the job decide the level of outcome and satisfaction. Therefore, Management can achieve motivation through some fundamental changes in the job nature. Furthermore, Job characteristics model help managers to design job with motivational properties. According to job design model motivation, satisfaction, reward, and performance are integrated. Therefore, an Individual perception of high core job characteristics enhances job satisfaction, motivation, and performance (Ferries & Fried, 1986).

**Figure 4 Implications of Job design model**

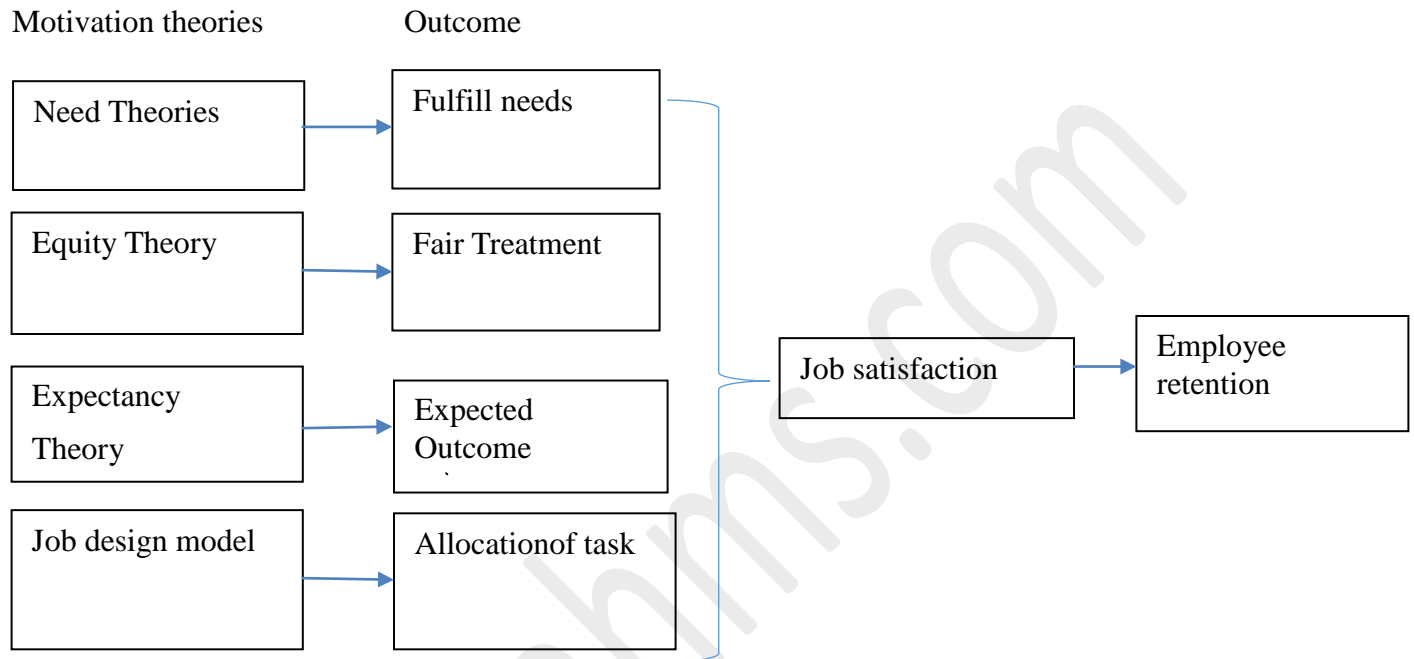


Source: Developed for the study

### 3. Proposed motivation model of employee retention

The following framework discusses the theoretical framework of motivational theories implications on employee retention.

Figure: 5 Proposed frameworks of motivational theories implications on employee retention



Source: Developed for the study

Figure 5 demonstrate motivation theories and their outcome in employee retention. Human behavior is the reflection of their characters. Every human has different characters and needs a different level of approach. A competent manager needs to recognize that different motivators are appropriate for different staff and that different staff will demonstrate differing necessary levels of motivation in setting their targets and striving towards them (Rowley, 1996). Similarly, motivation theories used to address employee retention problem through motivation due to the fact of their consistency in addressing intrinsic and extrinsic factors that influence employee job satisfaction. Studies argue that organizations with committed employees are likely to have lower turnover (Porter & Steers, 1973). Motivation theories are considered general statements. Moreover, motivation theories confirmed through observational studies and are applicable only to the extent that they reflect and influenced by individual behavior (Ralphnader, 2013).

### 4. CONCLUSION

This paper is predominantly based on literature review. Extensive literature study is used to identify relevant information and references (Zin et al., 2012). Given the emphasis within an organization on retaining its critical employees, the author has summarized some of the most widely used motivation theories as cited in the respective literature sources to enhance employee retention. Figure 5 illustrates how the employee retention can be influenced by the motivation theories thereby, providing a theoretical explanation of the practice. The proposed motivational

model presented here is based on existing literature. It needs to be investigated through empirical work to form a sound basis. In constructing this model, the emphasis is given in current literature on the managerial view of motivation rather than the individual view.

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