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Near Vishal School,  
LIC Colony,  
Pragali Nagar, Latur  
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**Website**

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Contact : - 02382 - 241913

09423346913 / 09637935252

09503814000 / 07276301000

E-mail :

visiongroup1994@gmail.com

interlinkresearch@rediffmail.com

mbkamble2010@gmail.com

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**Research Paper**

**Commerce**

**PUBLIC ORGANIZATION VIS-A-VIS INTRINSIC MOTIVATION**

**Dr. Prakash Kadrekar**  
Dept. of Commerce,  
Degloor College,  
Degloor, Dist. Nanded (MS) India

**ABSTRACT**

*Since the rise and domination of large complex organizations in our society, scholars and practitioners have focused on understanding the conditions that motivate employees to effectively serve the goals of these organizations. Early on, many scholars believed that employees could be primarily motivated to serve the goals of organizations with the effective use of monetary incentives. Perhaps one of the early most influential scholars to promote the value of monetary rewards was Fredrick Taylor (1916). His strategy involved decomposing whole jobs into their most simplistic standardized elements and paying employees piecemeal according to the work performed. Inadvertently this practice created a class of work that was rudimentary, dehumanizing, and devoid of those aspects that provide individuals with a sense of pride, accomplishment, and participation in a larger group enterprise. While Taylor had hoped that the lack of intrinsic qualities in the employees' work would be offset by higher rates of pay due to greater productivity, this goal was not fully accomplished in most organizations.*

**Keywords:** Factors of Motivation, Non-Profit Organization, Strategies, Past Experiences.





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### **Introduction:**

Fortunately, there are scholars and practitioners who challenge the assumption that the intrinsic qualities of work should be sacrificed or replaced by monetary rewards to motivate employees. These voices came out of the human relations movement. This movement encouraged organizations to emphasize the nonmonetary motivators that positively influence the well-being, satisfaction, commitment, and job performance of employees. This advice has been embraced whole-heartedly by many scholars and practitioners, particularly in the field of public administration, which has shown that public employees are distinctively attracted to the intrinsic nonmonetary qualities of their work environment, mainly when compared to private-sector employees. This is very important and pragmatic given the fact that public organizations often lack the financial resources to rely heavily on monetary incentives as a major motivational strategy. However, some public administration scholars often characterize intrinsic motivation in ways that are inherently incompatible with our 21st-century organizational environment and prevailing human relations principles. Consequently, the purpose of this research-paper is to present a conceptual framework that can be used to explore and understand intrinsic motivation in public organizations.

### **Intrinsic Motivation?**

What is intrinsic motivation? Intrinsic motivation is a subcategory of employee motivation. Kanfer (1990) defines employee motivation as the energy within employees that directs and sustains their efforts in organizations. Stated another way, employee motivation is the fuel that propels individuals to act in certain ways and toward certain goals. This energy is generated from an expectation that internal needs will be satisfied. These internal needs can be physiologically based (such as the needs for food, shelter, and sleep) or psychologically based (such as the needs for love, belongingness, and self-esteem). Maslow (1943) categorizes the psychological and physiological needs as higher level and lower level needs, respectively.

While the psychological and physiological needs are very important to individuals, there are real differences between these needs. According to White (1959) one of the major differences between psychological and physiological needs is their importance to individuals after they are fulfilled. Many believe that the importance of physiological needs decreases as they are satisfied, while the importance of the psychological needs grows as they are satisfied. For example, in normal individuals the importance of the physiological need for food decreases as they receive adequate nourishment, while the importance of the

101





Herzberg (1973) described the need for self- someone else wants them to. Additionally, they believe that they are doing things because they have control over their own lives. Instead, outside sources to do things, they do not feel that believe that when individuals are pressured from pressured from outside sources. Some scholars desire to do things for themselves without being causal agents. In other words, individuals have a individuals have a natural desire to be their own determination. According to DeCharms (1968), intrinsic motivation is the need for self-

**Stimulation:**

A third psychological need that can produce intrinsic motivation is the need for stimulation. The need for stimulation is the desire to have meaningful interactions with the environment. Multiple experimental and developmental studies have established that stimulation is very important for the development of the human brain. The lack of stimulation has been linked to the mental impairment of humans, as well as animals. Goldstein (1995) argued that

**Interpersonal Interaction:**

A second psychological need that can produce intrinsic motivation is the need for interpersonal interaction. The need for interpersonal interaction is the desire to forge meaningful connections with other people. It is well known that humans are social beings who desire healthy meaningful relationships. These relationships give individuals a sense of their place in the world, in relationship to others and within their communities. Maslow (1943) described the need for interpersonal interaction as the need for belongingness and love. Similarly, other scholars described the need for interpersonal interaction as the need for relatedness.

One psychological need that can produce Self-Determination: individuals. of these needs and their importance to discussion that follows will review four examples to accomplish the goals of organizations. The needs can intrinsically energize employees to be satisfied. Accordingly, many psychological or expectation that one's higher level needs will intrinsic motivation is produced from the desire, lower level physiological needs. In other words, psychological needs of individuals, rather than their from the satisfaction of the higher level of the author that intrinsic motivation is produced ability to produce intrinsic motivation. It is the belief psychological and physiological needs is their relationships. Additionally, a second difference between psychological need for love increases in loving

relationships. psychological need for love increases in loving relationships. Additionally, a second difference between psychological and physiological needs is their ability to produce intrinsic motivation. It is the belief of the author that intrinsic motivation is produced from the satisfaction of the higher level psychological needs of individuals, rather than their lower level physiological needs. In other words, intrinsic motivation is produced from the desire, or expectation that one's higher level needs will be satisfied. Accordingly, many psychological needs can intrinsically energize employees to accomplish the goals of organizations. The discussion that follows will review four examples of these needs and their importance to individuals. Self-Determination: individuals. of these needs and their importance to discussion that follows will review four examples to accomplish the goals of organizations. The needs can intrinsically energize employees to be satisfied. Accordingly, many psychological or expectation that one's higher level needs will intrinsic motivation is produced from the desire, lower level physiological needs. In other words, psychological needs of individuals, rather than their from the satisfaction of the higher level of the author that intrinsic motivation is produced ability to produce intrinsic motivation. It is the belief psychological and physiological needs is their relationships. Additionally, a second difference between psychological need for love increases in loving





## **Indo Global Researchers (IGR)**

healthy organisms have a natural desire to have a stimulating environment, while unhealthy organisms consistently avoid stimulating situations. Additionally, Hackman and Oldham (1980) argued that the lack of stimulation in the workplace is a major cause of employees' disinterest, dissatisfaction, and poor job performance. These scholars recommended strategies for assessing the level of stimulation in the workplace, as well as remedies for correcting monotonous working conditions.

### **Growth:**

A fourth psychological need that can produce intrinsic motivation is the need for growth. The need for growth is the desire to continually improve one's knowledge, skills, and abilities. Maslow (1943) equated the need for growth as a need for self-actualization. Self-actualization is the desire to be the best one can be. He believed that the needs for growth and self-actualization lead individuals on a quest for mastery, achievement, independence, and prestige. Similarly, some scholars illustrate the need for growth as the need for competency. Maslow defined the need for competency as the desire to master the environment and discover its effects on individuals.

Moreover, several concluding points are in order. For one, this discussion does not present the entire range of psychological needs that influence intrinsically motivated behaviour. Many

more psychological needs can influence employees' behaviour. Some of these needs are well known, while others are yet to be discovered. This discussion provides only a few examples of the many psychological needs that can influence individuals' behaviour. Secondly, individuals will differ on the types of psychological needs that are important to them. Because of differing life experiences, the importance of certain needs to an individual will vary from person to person.

### **Intrinsic Opportunities: The Sources of Intrinsic Motivation:**

It is generally accepted by most scholars that intrinsic motivation is the energy that is derived from the satisfaction of the psychological needs of employees. Unfortunately, there is disagreement in the literature regarding the workplace conditions that can satisfy these needs. Much of this debate also centres on disagreement regarding which psychological need is the primary source of intrinsic motivation. A review of the literature reveals at least two major perspectives concerning the primary sources of intrinsic motivation: source-based and need-based. The discussion that follows will briefly review and critique these viewpoints.

### **Source-Based Perspective:**

The first perspective on the conditions that can produce intrinsic motivation is the source-based perspective. The field of public





## **Indo Global Researchers (IGR)**

administration largely adopts this perspective. Source-based theorists distinguish between intrinsic and extrinsic rewards based on where the reward originates. They propose that incentives generated from outside the recipients are considered extrinsic opportunities (i.e., recognition and monetary rewards), while incentives generated from within recipients are considered intrinsic opportunities (i.e., feelings of appreciation and well-being). This approach is based on the assumption that individuals strive to be their own causal agents. In other words, people would rather attribute their behaviour to themselves, rather than to the influences of others. As a result, the need for self-determination is believed to be the primary source of intrinsic motivation. Prominent source-based scholars note that this need for self-determination is inherently incompatible with extrinsic (externally generated) opportunities.

### **Need-Based Perspective:**

The second perspective on the conditions that produce intrinsic motivation is the need-based perspective. From the need-based perspective, the most important distinguishing characteristic of intrinsic opportunities is not their source, but the psychological needs of employees that are fulfilled. Workplace opportunities and incentives that fulfil the higher level needs of individuals (i.e., needs for interpersonal interaction, growth, stimulation, and self-determination) are considered intrinsically

related. On the other hand, opportunities and incentives that fulfil the lower level needs of individuals (i.e., needs for security and safety) are considered extrinsically related. Unlike the source-based perspective, the need-based perspective is not particular about the psychological needs that can produce intrinsic motivation.

### **Critique of Source-Based Perspectives:**

Both the need-based and source-based perspectives on intrinsic rewards and intrinsic motivation offer important insight; however, this research-paper adopts the need-based perspective as the most valid approach to understanding intrinsic motivation for several reasons. For one, a major weakness of the source-based perspective is the assumption that the need for self-determination is the primary psychological need that can produce intrinsic motivation. As previously reviewed, the need for self-determination is one of many higher level needs that produce intrinsically motivated behaviour in organizations. Hence, in addition to the need for self-determination, individuals can also be intrinsically motivated from the satisfaction of their needs for growth, stimulation, and interpersonal interactions.

A second weakness of the source-based perspective is its argument that the need for self-determination cannot be fulfilled with the use of externally created opportunities. This perspective implies that intrinsic motivation





## **Indo Global Researchers (IGR)**

cannot be addressed by organizations. The human relations movement is based on the premise that organizations should foster workplace conditions that give employees opportunities, such as discretion and autonomy—two job conditions that can positively satisfy employees' needs to be their own causal agent. Hence, most of the conditions in organizations are externally created by the designers, leaders, and managers of organizations. Even further, some scholars argue that people do not interpret externally generated opportunities as controlling events. Instead, these opportunities are understood to be an acknowledgment by the reward giver of his or her lack of control over the reward recipient, since the reward recipient could have chosen not to perform as requested.

Therefore, the conditions that can be intrinsically motivating to employees can be divided into two major categories. Intrinsic incentives generated from within individuals are called internal intrinsic opportunities. Examples of internal intrinsic opportunities are feelings of appreciation and well-being. Next, intrinsic incentives generated from sources outside individuals are called external intrinsic opportunities. Examples of external intrinsic opportunities are professional development, career advancement, and personal recognition. Both types of opportunities and incentives can potentially be intrinsically rewarding to

employees to the extent that they satisfy their higher level needs.

Additionally, two points are in order. First, from this framework, monetary incentives can be intrinsically rewarding to employees. These opportunities can give employees a sense of their progress and accomplishments, which can be satisfying to their growth needs. Secondly, it is also important to note that organizations have more control over external intrinsic opportunities than internal intrinsic opportunities. For example, organizations can directly influence the access that employees have to external intrinsic opportunities, such as task meaningfulness, personal recognition, and career advancement through the design of their work and supervision strategies.

### **Potential Explanations for Work Preferences:**

Research on the intrinsic preferences of public employees offers important insights. Much of the research suggests that public employees place great emphasis on the intrinsic conditions of their work. These conditions appear to be more important to public employees than monetary opportunities. Hence, even though monetary opportunities can be intrinsically rewarding for many employees, public-administration research findings suggest that the psychological needs of most public employees are best fulfilled with intrinsic nonmonetary opportunities. This finding, however, raises an important question. That is, why are public employees attracted to intrinsic





## **Indo Global Researchers (IGR)**

nonmonetary opportunities? The discussion that follows will provide eight potential answers to this question.

### **Public-Service Motivation:**

Public-service motivation is the seventh factor that may affect the work preferences of public employees. Public service motivation has been characterized in many different ways, such as a service ethic, calling, or altruistic aims that motivate individuals to serve the public interest, help others, and be useful to society. Recently, Perry and Wise (1990) defined public-service motivation as an individual's predispositions to respond to motives that are grounded uniquely in public organizations and institutions. Many argue that employees with high levels of public-service motivation are attracted to nonmonetary opportunities, because they have innate altruistic needs that cannot be fulfilled by monetary opportunities and higher salary.

Recent research suggests that public-service motivation is a strong predictor of the intrinsic preferences of public employees. For example, Brewer, Selden, and Facer (2000) discovered four unique variations of public employees with high levels of public-service motivation. They labelled these varied employee groups as communitarians, humanitarians, patriots, and Samaritans. While each of these variations of public-service motivation had distinctive intrinsic work preferences, none was

primarily motivated by monetary opportunities. Similarly, Bright (2005), using a sample of local government employees, found public-service motivation to be negatively related to the desires that public employees have for monetary opportunities.

### **Conclusion:**

This purpose of this research-paper was to review intrinsic motivation from the perspective of public administration. Intrinsic motivation was defined as the energy that is produced from the satisfaction of individuals' psychological needs. A few examples of psychological needs that can produce intrinsic motivation are the needs for growth, interpersonal interaction, and self-determination. While there is much debate on this issue, it is the author's belief that employees' psychological needs can be satisfied with incentives such as professional development, money, career advancement, and personal recognition.

Furthermore, the research in public administration confirms the importance of intrinsic opportunities in public organizations. Even though monetary opportunities can be intrinsically rewarding, research has found that public-sector employees place less emphasis on these opportunities than do private-sector employees. In most cases, private-sector employees desired monetary opportunities significantly more than public-sector employees. Public-administration





## **Indo Global Researchers (IGR)**

scholars have also shown that public employees highly desire many kinds of intrinsic nonmonetary opportunities, such as meaningful work, personal recognition, and professional development.

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