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UNDERSTANDING EMPLOYEE MOTIVATION THROUGH MANAGERIAL COMMUNICATION USING EXPECTANCY-VALENCE THEORY

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Abstract

This paper addresses employees' expectations of performance rewards and their motivation by understanding communication with their managers through the use of Expectancy-Valence Theory. Previous research has predominantly addressed employee motivation, expectations, and communication interactions, as a onetime event, while often ignoring the valence and context of the interactions concerning the individuals communicating. In addition, little is known about the impact that these variables have when interacting together with employees and managers. Therefore, Expectancy-Valence Theory is proposed in this paper for overcoming these shortcomings of understanding employee motivation by examining the communication between employees and managers. This paper focuses on specific aspects of communication such as communication behaviors, expectations, communication interactions, and outcomes from the communication interactions. These areas of communication are also applied to general areas within the social sciences.

Keywords: Employee Motivation, Manager Communication, Expectancy-Valence Theory

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INTRODUCTION

Organizations often spend a tremendous amount of time, effort, and money attempting to increase their productivity, efficiency, and employee satisfaction. One way in which organizations achieve this increase is through employee motivation. Training programs should be implemented for managers to become more aware of the impact that their communication interactions have with their employees' motivation and in turn the organization. For this paper, motivation is defined as the amount of effort an individual desires to exert towards his or her job performance. Organizations are always searching for innovative ways to increase employee motivation.

When employees are motivated, the potential for them to work harder and become more satisfied with their jobs increases compared to demotivated employees (Elias, Smith, & Barney, 2012). Motivation can lead to increased job performance, in less time, which adds to efficiency. Thus, organizations can increase their productivity while decreasing their expenses. The understanding of employee motivation can tremendously influence an organization.

One important area to address when studying employee motivation is interactions between employees with their manager and the expectations created by their manager's communication (Janssen, & Van Yperen, 2004; Yuan, & Woodman, 2010). Expectations and congruence and violations of these expectations are important to further understand because they often influence interactions between employees and managers (Afifi & Burgoon, 2000; Gorges & Kandler, 2012; Lawler III, 2008). This paper focuses on employees' expectations of their performance rewards created by their managers' communication. Employees' expectations are defined as the anticipation of the way an employee thinks a manager will reward them in the future concerning their job performance. In other words, expectations of the employee about the rewards an employee thinks his or her manager will make available to the employee based upon the employee's job performance. For instance, one employee may anticipate receiving positive communication behaviors from his or her manager such as compliments about their job performance, while another employee may foresee monetary rewards from his or her manager. This is important to understand because expectations have been found to influence an individual's motivation (Dobos, 1996; Gorges & Kandler, 2012).

Employees' expectations of their manager have not been adequately studied in the organizational context. Since motivation and demotivation are often a result of communication interactions (Mayfield, Mayfield, & Sharbrough, 2015; Parfyonova, 2010) and expectations often influence communication interaction outcomes, then employees' expectations are likely to have an impact on their motivation. Employees have expectations of their manager resulting from their manager's status. Employees may expect feedback about their performance communicated to them from their manager. The feedback can come in verbal form or tangible.

One possible theoretical framework from which to better understand employees' motivation from their communication with their manager concerning their job performance is expectancy-valence theory. Characteristics of this theory have been tested and proved reliable when assessing motivation in previous studies (Gorges & Kandler, 2012; Sanchez, Truxillo, & Bauer, 2000), but the literature does not adequately test expectancy-valence theory (Yuan, & Woodman, 2010). In other words, the theory in its entirety has not been tested and substantiated (Lepper, Henderlong, & Gingras, 1999; Wu, Geralch, & Young, 2007; Yuan, & Woodman, 2010). Previous research has provided evidence that these areas independently are important to understand concerning an individual's level of motivation (Burgoon & Hale, 1988; Eisenberger, Rhoades, & Cameron, 1999; Honeycutt, 1989; Le Poire & Burgoon, 1994; Liden, Wayne, & Sparrowe, 2000; Lunenburg, 2011), but the interaction that these variables have with each other still is not fully understood. The purpose of this paper is to bring attention to the need for research to implement expectancy-valence theory for understanding employees' expectations of managers' communication interactions about their performance to better understand employees' motivation.

EXPECTANCY-VALENCE THEORY

Expectancy-valence theory is a theory focused on motivation based upon the choices an individual makes when striving for a goal. The theory takes into account the expectations of an individual when understanding their anticipated motivation. Employee expectations can often be influenced by their supervisor (Yuan, & Woodman, 2010). Expectancy-valence theory is important for investigating motivation because the overall context of the interactions between supervisors and employees is important to understand, which include employee expectations (Andersen, Guerrero, Buller, & Jorgensen, 1998; O'Neal, 2012; Yuan, & Woodman, 2010). Leadership plays an important part within organizations and its context by influencing employee expectations and experiences along with their subsequent behaviors (Bohn, & Grafton, 2002; Fassina, Jones, & Uggerslev, 2008; Yuan, & Woodman, 2010). House and Mitchell (1974) further describe the importance of communication interactions between supervisors and their subordinates through their development of path-goal theory of leadership. They describe the important role that supervisors have with influencing employee outcomes such as employee motivation. Supervisors can influence employees through the support they provide their subordinates within a particular context. One way supervisors can influence employee motivation through their support is by communicating clear expectations they create with their employees. The communication interactions of support that supervisors have with their employees can create expectations for their employees. These expectations of their employees play a role with their motivation. The expectations for employees set by their supervisor can help to create guided direction for employees to work toward.

Vroom (1964) was one of the first people to address expectancy-valence theory and states expectancy-valence theory as consisting of three components. First, individuals expect certain outcomes from particular behaviors. Second, every outcome has some value to an individual. Third, the selection of outcomes an individual has to choose from has a level of effort that the individual will have to exert in order to achieve the desired outcome.

Lunenburg (2011) makes the argument that communication between managers and employees plays an essential role in employee motivation. His support for this position comes from a better understanding and prediction of employee motivation from taking into account the context. Expectancy-valence theory can assist with this understanding because it takes into account the importance of context with motivation. Other theories are limited because they offer specific suggestions that are not flexible enough for varying contexts with employees and managers.

Lunenburg's (2011) emphasis on managerial communication and employee motivation can be identified and used within the three components of expectancy-valence theory. First, it is the managers who set the expectations for employees. Managers should communicate the requirements of the job clearly. This will enable employees to have clear expectations as to what performance will be rewarded. Managers can also take into account employees' suggestions to enable them to succeed and adjust expectations if needed. Furthermore, they can guide employees to encourage them to accomplish their performance goals. Essentially, managers should communicate clear expectations and also assist employees' success along the way. This is consistent with the first component of expectancy-valence theory that employees will expect certain outcomes from certain behaviors.

Consistent with the second component of expectancy-valence theory, Lunenburg (2011) also emphasizes the importance of rewards with employees' motivation. Managers should communicate clearly the rewards that will be awarded for particular tasks. The importance of communication comes from managers communicating with employees to understand what they value. Employees will be much more motivated if they receive rewards they want rather than rewards unrelated or disinteresting to them. The communication of relevant rewards to employees is consistent with the second part of expectancy-valence theory. This part addresses the value that people place on rewards will influence their motivation. Hence, if employees clearly understand and desire the rewards that they can receive from their performance, then their motivation is likely to be positively influenced.

Third, Lunenburg (2011) describes ways that managers can link employees' effort to specific rewards. One way is through clearly communicating the evaluation of their performance, such as having clear and accurate assessments. Another way is to provide clear examples of ways to achieve the rewards such as describing previous employees' past performance who received specific rewards. It is important that employees see the clear connection between specific performance and specific rewards with concrete examples.

As was previously described in this section, communication is an intricate part for understanding the three parts of expectancy-valence theory. It is through communication from supervisors that employees understand their behaviors that are associated with specific outcomes. Supervisors need to communicate with employees to understand what employees value to address the second part of expectancy-valence theory. The last part of expectancy-valence theory also emphasizes the importance of communication by the supervisor to communicate to employees how their performance will be evaluated. Supervisors need to clearly communicate the standards and criteria that are associated with specific performance. Supervisors also need to communicate how specific assessments will be used. For example, supervisors need to clarify who does the evaluation, such as whether it is evaluated by clients, other employees, supervisors or some combination of these people. Employees need to have a clear understanding of performance goals and how they are evaluated for the third part of expectancy-valence theory to be completed. Communication plays a vital role for this understanding to be clear and consistent. It is through consistent and clear communication between supervisors and their employees that a common understanding of the three major components of expectancy-valence theory can be implemented in organizations.

One of the strengths of expectancy-valence theory is that the same manager can apply it to more than one subordinate. When applying expectancy-valence theory each manager should consider what the goals and culture of the organization are along with what the subordinates value. One of the goals of expectancy-valence theory is to encourage employees to exhibit behaviors that are beneficial to the organization through their motivation. Therefore, managers should communicate what performance behaviors are associated with which organizational goals to address step one of expectancy-valence theory. Managers should understand the organizational culture of their subordinates and understand what the subordinates value to address the second part of expectancy-valence theory. The third part of expectancy-valence theory should align certain performance efforts that are consistent with the organization’s mission and goals with particular rewards. It is through the manager understanding and communicating to their subordinates the mission and goals of the organization along with understanding the organizational culture that managers can create a structure to implement expectancy-valence theory to multiple subordinates. It is the direction of the organization that can create the structure of expectancy-valence theory that can be communicated from managers to multiple subordinates.

This paper differs from Lunenburg’s (2011) article by focusing on the communication intricacies that occur during managerial and employee interactions. These interactions are important to understand because leader-member exchange theory indicates that expectations are often formed about each member interacting that can impact the quality of the supervisor and subordinate interactions (Dulebohn, Bommer, Liden, Brouer, & Ferris, 2012). However, leader-member exchange theory has not adequately implemented expectancy-valence theory to better understand employee motivation through communication. Understanding supervisor and subordinate communication interactions through expectancy-valence theory can bring in a new perspective about employee likely future motivation. This paper addresses the way communication is formed and the impact that it has on employee motivation. For instance, it covers the areas of communication behaviors, expectations influenced by communication, communication interactions, and outcomes resulting from these communication interactions. Therefore, it is argued in this paper that the three stages of expectancy-valence theory can be applied to the communication interactions between managers and employees to better understand employee motivation. To begin with, expectations of employees concerning outcomes for their behaviors is the first proposition of the theory. The employees' possible rewards as communicated by their manager along with the value employees place on them is consistent with the second proposition of the theory. The amount of effort and quality of performance from an employee to possibly receive specific rewards comprises the last proposition of the theory. Therefore, communication plays an intricate role within expectancy-valence theory applying to a number of circumstances involving employees and managers.

Motivation

Employee motivation plays an important part within organizations. For instance, employee motivation can be a major factor with employee performance. Employees who are more motivated tend to perform better, such as doing more work in less time (Riketta, 2008). Employee performance is important because organizational success or failure is often dependent upon how much effort employees put forth when completing their job tasks. If employees do not perform well, the organization will produce less for the same costs of labor as motivated employees but will have less production than motivated employees. In turn, the organization will likely have difficulty making money and paying their expenses.

The importance of employee motivation can also be understood through organizational culture (Dimitrios, Kastanioti, Maria, & Dimitris, 2014). Employee motivation and organizational culture are intertwined (Sokro, 2012). When employees feel a bond with other employees such as through their organizational culture, they tend to be more motivated and satisfied with their job compared with employees who do not feel a connection with their organizational culture (Scheers & Botha, 2014). An organizational culture can communicate to employees what is important to the organization, such as employee motivation (Berry, 2011). Supervisors can help by creating an organizational cultural structure that encourages employee motivation (Janssen, & Van Yperen, 2004; Mancini, 2010). This can be done by supervisors communicating expectancy-valence theory to their employees. Supervisors can create an organizational structure that rewards certain employee behaviors with rewards that employees value. The organizational culture can create a motivated organization in accordance with expectancy-valence theory. The organizational culture can communicate to employees what behaviors are associated with which outcomes. It can also present possible outcomes that employees value in order to meet the second component of expectancy-valence theory. The organizational culture can also communicate to employees the differing amounts of effort that is needed to accomplish each specific outcome valued by employees and fulfill the third part of expectancy-valence theory.

Ashtalkosi and Ashtalkoska (2012) address the importance of job criteria with employee motivation. They emphasize that supervisors need to understand what motivates employees with their job. This understanding can be consistent with expectancy-valence theory. When supervisors understand what their employees value they can accomplish the first part of expectancy-value theory by communicating what behaviors are likely to lead to those valued outcomes. The second portion of expectancy-valence theory will be fulfilled by understanding what employees value. If possible, some of what employees value should be obtainable by employees through their workplace behaviors. The last step of expectancy-valence theory that supervisors can accomplish with their employees is by clearly communicating the different amounts of effort that is needed to accomplish each valued outcome.

Several factors determine an individual’s motivation level. Two common forms of motivation are intrinsic motivations and extrinsic motivations. Intrinsic motivations result from satisfying an individual’s beliefs and values. On the other hand, extrinsic motivations are based on tangible economic returns, goods, recognition, or services to the individual (Kreps, 1990). One form of extrinsic rewards is money. However, intrinsic motivation occurs when an activity is performed for the enjoyment of doing the tasks. Intrinsically motivated employees often perform an activity because they find the activity itself rewarding. People experience the enjoyment, competence, and self-motivation when performing a task and credit their behaviors to internal factors, which they control, such as emotions (Abuhamdeh & Csikszentmihalyi, 2012). On the other hand, extrinsic rewards indicate a decrease in control over the situation. An individual shifts his or her focus from the enjoyment of an activity to the reward value of performing activities (Cinar, 2011).

Organizations should determine intrinsic and extrinsic components that motivate employees (Cinar, 2011). This will allow managers to put in place rewards that are valued by employees. This is consistent with the second component of expectancy-valence theory involving valence of the rewards and is important to employee motivation. Katzell and Thompson (1990) identified seven intrinsic and extrinsic factors, which can increase employees’ motivation. The seven include:

> “…ensure that workers’ motives and values are appropriate for the jobs on which they are placed; make jobs attractive to and consistent with workers’ motives and values; define work goals that are clear, challenging, attractive,

> and attainable; provide workers with the personnel and the material resources that facilitate their effectiveness; create supportive social environments; reinforce performance; and harmonize all of these elements into a consistent sociotechnical system." (p. 151)

Extrinsic and intrinsic motivators can be thought of as goals for motivating individuals. The goals of an individual are often an influential factor in determining his or her level of motivation (Jang, & Liu, 2012; Steele-Johnson, Beauregard, Hoover, & Schmidt, 2000). Eisenberger, Rhoades, and Cameron (1999) found that individual's expectations of rewards or outcomes from performing a particular task had a positive relationship with their intrinsic motivation. For instance, individuals who thought they would receive more rewards for performing a particular task had higher levels of intrinsic motivation than did those who had lower reward expectations for performing the same task. This is consistent with the last proposition of expectancy-valence theory which addresses the outcomes or goals that are available to the individual will influence the level of motivation or effort that the person wants to exert in order to receive the desired goals.

<u>Proposition 1</u>: The valence that an employee places on their potential performance rewards is positively related to the amount of influence their manager's communication has addressing their performance.

Communication Behaviors

There are still other factors that influence motivation in the organizational context (Mirvis, 2012; Venkatesh & Speier, 1999). Work motivation can be thought of as "a broad construct pertaining to the conditions and processes that account for the arousal, direction, magnitude, and maintenance of effort in a person's job" (Kantzell & Thompson, 1990, p. 144). As a result of managerial communication behaviors influencing employees' motivation (Parfyonova, 2010), employees' motivation is a continual process within organizations based upon their communication interactions with their manager (Mirvis, 2012). Feedback is one factor that can influence employee motivation in the organizational context (Mayfield & Mayfield, 2012). Larson (1989) found negative feedback from managers increase motivation for employees by examining the relationship between employees' motivation to perform particular behaviors in order to reduce the negative feedback from their manager. When an employee is aware of his or her poor performance, the employee is often motivated to behave in ways that will correct the poor performance in order to get positive feedback and to maintain positive self-esteem. This is consistent with expectancy-valence theory. First, an employee expects to receive negative feedback from a manager when performing poorly and positive feedback when performing superbly. Second, the employee often values the type of feedback that they receive from their manager. Third, an employee can also choose to put forth more effort to perform better in hopes of receiving positive feedback from his or her manager when positive feedback is valued by the employee. Thus, employees' expectations of their managers concerning their performance feedback along with the managerial communication interactions that take place with employees are pertinent to understanding employees' motivation as ever-changing within the organizational context.

Contrary to the previous research just described, some researchers have found positive managerial communication to be more motivating to employees than negative feedback. Deci's (1971) article is an instrumental piece with understanding motivation. He found intrinsic motivation increased when the individual received positive verbal reinforcement and positive feedback. Intrinsic motivation may be linked to verbal reinforcement and positive nonverbal feedback. Therefore, managers' positive feedback may be viewed as a reward that increases intrinsic motivation because it often creates positive emotional stimuli within the individual receiving the positive feedback and leads to employees enjoying performing the task.

The inconsistency found among the literature between managers' communication interactions with employees and employees' motivation may be explained by expectancy-valence theory. The same outcomes of employees' motivation that result from different forms of feedback might be influenced by such factors addressed in expectancy-valence theory such as the communication expectations of the employee concerning their manager and the value of the feedback to the employee. Therefore, inconsistencies with previous research might be a result of the individuals communicating and the situation. Aligned with expectancy-valence theory, first the employees who increase their motivation from negative feedback from their manager might expect that their behaviors of increased motivation will result in less negative feedback. Second, communication experiences with their manager are valued. Third, they perceive that the amount of effort needed to increase their motivation is a good choice to make for decreasing negative feedback. On the other hand, employees who increase their motivation from positive communication first expect that exhibiting more motivational behaviors will result with more positive communicative experiences with their managers. Second, it is important to the employee to receive positive communication from their manager and third, the increase of effort to receive more positive communication is worthwhile to the employee. None of these factors were addressed with the research previously described. Thus, studying employees' motivation through the use of expectancy-valence theory is essential to further understanding employees' motivation.

Proposition 2: A manager's feedback with an employee concerning the employee's job performance impacts the employee's motivation.

EXPECTATIONS

The area of expectations has been studied extensively in association with the effects of communication behaviors and their outcomes (Afifi & Burgoon, 2000; Burgoon & Walther, 1990; Honeycutt, 1989; Le Poire & Burgoon, 1994; Rubie-Davies, 2007). Employee expectations are a necessary component to understand when addressing the issue of employee motivation. Employee pre-interaction expectations might have the potential to influence their motivation differently than do employees lacking such pre-expectations (Yuan, & Woodman, 2010). For example, an employee who has lower levels of expectations about receiving their job performance rewards stemming from communication with their manager will likely have lower levels of motivation than an employee who has higher expectations about the probability of receiving rewards as influenced from communication with their manager based upon the findings of Dobos (1996). Thus, employees may have their motivation impacted long after the actual communication interaction with their manager that created those expectations (Yuan, & Woodman, 2010). For example, an employee may set job performance reward expectations from the first communication interaction that they have with their manager that may impact their motivation for months or even years.

Violations and fulfillments of employees' expectations about their job performance rewards from their managers become communication experiences that influence the creation of future new expectations about their job performance rewards. The ever-changing formations of expectations will influence communication interactions and outcomes such as motivation when they are either met or violated. Thus, understanding expectations that employees have of their job performance rewards stemming from the communication they have with their manager should allow researchers to prescribe strategies for more effective organizational communication outcomes, such as increasing employees' motivation.

Formation of Expectations

The formation of expectations is influenced by past experiences the individual has encountered (Becker, Leitner, & Leopold-Wildburger, 2009). For instance, an employee will often establish certain expectations concerning his or her manager after having some communication interaction experiences with them (Janssen, & Van Yperen, 2004). Also, new employees may have expectations of their manager based upon previous communication interactions with previous managers.

Experiences are often found to be more influential than expectations (Koermer & Petelle, 1991). Sometimes the individual has a combination of these factors, which influence the evaluation of a communication encounter. Thus, indicating that both the communication expectations and communication interactions that take place between managers and employees is important to understand. Expectations and experiences have an intricate role in communication interactions.

Expectations and experiences between managers and employees can also be applied to expectancy-valence theory. First, employees have certain expectations as to how managers will communicate with them about their job performance rewards often based upon previous interactions with them. Second, these interactions have some value to the employee regarding the possible rewards that the employee might receive. Depending upon the employee's expectations and value of the possible rewards, then third, several possible outcomes will occur from which the employee can choose depending upon their level of effort that they desire to put forth. Thus, it becomes imperative to investigate the possible implications that occur during communication interactions involving employee expectations of their managers (Gorges, & Kandler, 2012; Isaac, Sansone, & Smith, 1999).

Proposition 3: Employee motivation will increase when they value the possible performance rewards available to them and their communication interaction with their manager concerning the possibility of receiving those rewards exceed their expectations.

Proposition 4: Employee motivation will decrease when they value the possible performance rewards available to them and their communication interaction with their manager concerning the possibility of receiving those rewards is less than their expectations.

Communication Interactions

The effects of communication expectations can be an interactive process. The communication expectations of each individual can influence the communication interaction and be rather complex (Gorges, & Kandler, 2012; Liden, Wayne, & Sparrowe, 2000). Therefore, it is important to study employee communication interactions with managers (Waldron, & Kassing, 2011; Westerman & Rosse, 1997). Expectations may have an interactive impact in the organizational context. Employees' expectations of their managers concerning their job performance rewards may influence employee behaviors, while managers' expectations of employees' performance may influence managerial communication. Both may alter their behaviors to conform to their expectations. Along with studying the effects of initiators on expectations, researchers have revealed additional elements influencing expectations, such as relational knowledge guiding memory for conversations (McDonough & Gallo, 2012), previous achievement experiences (Poortvliet, Anseel, Janssen, Yperen, & Vliert, 2012), and persuasion (Lindstadt & Staton, 2012). Employees' expectations formed from their manager's communication about their job performance rewards can subsequently influence their motivation and performance (Gorges & Kandler, 2012).

Violations of a person's expectations is impactful to communication outcomes (Roese, & Sherman, 2007). Violations of expectations can influence an individual's motivation (Gorges & Kandler, 2012). This often occurs because more attention is adverted toward those occurrences perceived as violations that are different from social norms (Park, 2010). People have a limited amount of attention to focus on differing stimuli. It is not possible for a person to pay attention to all stimuli around them. Furthermore, it is not possible for someone to remember all of their personal experiences. Much of our experiences that are similar to each other tend to blend in and are not uniquely fully remembered. Those experiences that are different stand out and are remembered because there are fewer of them and it takes more effort to process unique experiences (Lannutti, Laliker, & Hale, 2001).

Subtle violations of expectations are often noticed (Proulx, Heine, & Vohs, 2010). When a person's expectations are violated the person evaluates the violation behaviors (Lannutti, Laliker, & Hale, 2001). The violations of expectations can be evaluated as a positive or negative violation of their expectations (Gorges, & Kandler, 2012; Hullett & Tamborini, 2001). Burgoon (1978) developed a framework to understand and describe the differences between positive and negative violations of expectations. Violations of expectations occur when communication behaviors occur that are not anticipated. Positive violations of expectations are those violations that are perceived more positively than was expected by the person who was violated. For example, a positive violation of expectations can occur when an employee expects their manager to offer one day off if they perform well for a task but the manager actually offers two days off for a good performance on a particular task. Violations of expectations can also be negative. For example, an employee might expect their manager to offer two days off for a good performance on a task but their manager only offers one day off for a good performance can serve as a negative violation of expectations. Both positive and negative violations of employees' expectations are likely to influence their motivation because behaviors that violate a person's expectations influence communication outcomes more than behaviors that are expected (Burgoon & Hale, 1988).

<u>Proposition 5</u>: Employees' expectations of their manager concerning their possible performance rewards are positively related to their prior communication interaction(s) experiences with their manager.

<u>Proposition 6</u>: Employee motivation will increase when their expectations about their job performance rewards are positively violated by their manager's communication about the possible rewards.

Proposition 7: Employee expectations about their job performance rewards that are negatively violated by their manager's communication about the possible rewards will decrease their motivation.

Proposition 8: Violations of employee expectations about their job performance rewards will produce greater changes in employee motivation than experiences with their manager that conform to expectations.

Proposition 9: Employee expectations about their job performance rewards stemming from interactions with their manager, the valence an employee places on each possible reward pertaining to their performance, and the effort needed to achieve each reward are all positively related to employee motivation when all of these variables are taken into account.

SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS

The exploration of employee motivation as influenced by employees' expectations of their job performance rewards as communicated to them by their manager, the valence employees have for possible performance rewards, and connecting performance with specific rewards are important for researchers to understand. Previous research has predominantly only addressed expectations, communication interactions, and motivation as a onetime event, while often ignoring the valence of the possible rewards during the communication interaction. However, the valence of the possible rewards for the employee is important to address (Cinar, 2011; Deci, Koestner, & Ryan, 1999). We know people's expectations change, communication interactions change, and the valence of an individual's assessment of possible rewards also change, but research has not adequately taken these changes into account when measuring an individual's level of motivation. Little is known about the impact that these variables have when interacting together. The interactions of these variables are unknown in the organizational context but insight can be gained from expectancy-valence theory.

This paper explored employee motivation as associated with employees' expectations concerning their job performance rewards, communication experiences with their manager, and the valence that the employees attribute to possible performance rewards. By further understanding this, organizations can save a tremendous amount of money. Employees who are more motivated through clear, realistic, and personally valuable reward expectations will work harder for the organization, thus increasing productivity. This increase in productivity will improve profits and also lead to more committed employees because they have more invested in the organization by exerting more effort. This increase in commitment will save the organization money by decreasing turnover and the organization will not have to spend resources on training new employees for jobs that were previously occupied by employees who quit.

One way to better understand employee motivation addressed in this paper is through expectancy-valence theory. Previous research lacks investigating employee expectations of their performance rewards as an ever-changing occurrence. Expectancy-valence theory takes into account the changing of employees' expectations and their subsequent motivational outcomes after communicating with their manager about their possible performance rewards. Expectancy-valence theory individualizes the decision-making process for each employee concerning their given context and possible performance rewards.

The flexibility of expectancy-valence theory allows managers to motivate their employees in many different contexts and on an individual basis. Managers can do this through communication with their employees and the expectations and rewards that they set forth. The managers need to set clear expectations for their employees' performance. In addition, they need to communicate the ways in which employees can meet these expectations along with specific examples. The expectations will be more influential if the employee values the possible performance rewards. Thus, it is important for the manager to know which rewards each employee values. This can be done through communicating with them and understanding what they value. Having valued rewards are not effective if the employee does not understand the connection between what performance is needed to obtain the rewards. Hence, it is necessary for managers to clearly communicate the measures used to determine whether employees receive the rewards and give specific examples that other employees have done to receive rewards they valued. The rewards do not have to be monetary either. Managers may find out that some of their employees are motivated by positive feedback from their managers. Other employees may be motivated if they earn the ability to dress casual at work. These can be beneficial to the organization because employee motivation can increase at no cost to the organization. However, it is the responsibility of managers to understand the performance rewards that their employees value. Again, this can be done through communicating with their employees. Along with performance rewards that employees value, having high employee performance reward expectations and highly positive experiences with managers that meet or exceed those expectations can be an effective strategy for employee motivation.

Social Sciences Application

Expectancy-valence theory can be useful for understanding human motivation in the social sciences. It can be applied to different people and contexts to better anticipate an individual's likely future motivation. A central theme that enables expectancy-valence theory to be useful in various contexts with people from differing backgrounds is communication. In order to understand someone's likely level of motivation, the individual needs to clearly understand what behaviors are associated with which specific outcomes.

It is through communication that they understand this connection. Second, it is important to know what each person values in a particular context. Communication is needed to understand what an individual values. The individual needs to communicate to others what is important and of value to them. Third, each individual needs to have clearly communicated to them what is needed to accomplish each possible outcome in order for them to understand how much effort is needed for each potential outcome. The criteria that is used to evaluate how each specific outcome is measured needs to also be clearly communicated for all persons involved. Expectancy-valence theory allows for general applications to a wide array of social sciences areas while allowing to address each specific context and person. This can only be accomplished through communication.

This paper addresses how employee motivation can be better understood using expectancy-valence theory through communication interactions with their supervisors. The likely motivation levels of students can also be better anticipated through expectancy-valence theory. Students can have clear expectations as to which behaviors are associated with which particular outcomes when their instructor clearly communicates these associations, such as through the use of a syllabus. Instructors can better understand what students value in a particular class, such as by giving students some flexibility to incorporate some of the topics that they value into their assignments. For example, instructors can allow students more flexibility in topic selections for assignments such as writing papers or giving presentations rather than specific assignment topics that students may not value. Instructors can fulfill the last part of expectancy-valence theory by clearly communicating to students how their assignment will be evaluated, such as specific criteria used outlined in the syllabus.

Consumer motivation can also be better understood through expectancy-valence theory. Consumers can better understand what outcomes are likely to occur when buying a particular product through the use of clear marketing communication. Businesses need to know what consumers value such as through focus groups and surveys of potential consumers. The final step in expectancy-valence theory for consumers can be accomplished by clearly communicating to consumers what needs to be done to get the product, such as asking them to go to a particular website or retail store.

Personal relationships can also be better understood through expectancy-valence theory. How motivated each partner is in a relationship can be better anticipated through clear communication by each partner. Each person in the relationship should understand what behaviors are likely to lead to particular outcome reactions from the other person. Each person should understand what is important and valuable to each partner. Each partner should understand how much effort is needed to accomplish each potential outcome. For example, one partner might expect a joyful reaction when they buy event tickets such as for a sporting event for both of them to attend. This is likely to occur if both partners enjoy attending sporting events. Each partner should understand how long and how much money it costs for a particular sporting event for which tickets are purchased.

Psychologist can also use expectancy-valence theory to better anticipate which advice and strategies their clients are more likely to be motivated to follow and implement the suggested strategies. The psychologist can clearly communicate positive outcomes that can occur when their client performs a suggested behavior. The psychologist should understand what each client values and possibly make their suggestions that are aligned with what their clients value. Psychologist can also communicate to their client approximately what is entailed in terms of effort to accomplish particular suggested behavioral changes.

As with each of these different contexts and areas of study within the social sciences, expectancy-valence theory can be effectively implemented when effective communication is used for a clear understanding for each part of expectancy-valence theory. The three components of expectancy-valence theory enables flexibility to better understand motivation in varying contexts and different individuals. People and contexts may change, but motivation tends to have a consistent framework through expectancy-valence theory.

Future Research

Future research should investigate what specific expectations employees have of their manager regarding their performance rewards. In addition, more needs to be investigated as to the valence that employees place on their performance rewards. For instance, identifying a plethora of rewards that employees value. This will help in better understanding the ways in which managers can meet and exceed these expectations in order to increase employees' motivation.

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