

Cognitive Theories of Motivation ^[1]

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The cognitive theories of motivation include the Expectancy Theory and the Goal-Setting Theory. The Expectancy Theory of Motivation explains why and how an individual chooses one behavioural option over others. On the other hand, the Goal-Setting Theory states the importance of creating goals in motivation a person.

Expectancy Theory

Proposed by Victor H. Vroom in 1964, the Expectancy Theory explicates the behavioural process in which a person selects a behavioural option over another, and how this decision is made in relation to their aim of achieving their goal. In this theory, three variables were introduced by Vroom to explain the said behavioural process. These include “V” for valence, “E” for expectancy, and “I” for instrumentality.

Expectancy

Expectancy is a variable that represents the belief that the effort (E) of an individual is an outcome of a a need to attain the performance (P) goals that he desires. The theory states that there are three factors that influence the expectancy perception of a person, which include:

1. **Self efficacy** – the individual’s belief regarding his own ability to perform a specific behaviour successfully.
2. **Goal difficulty** – occurs when the desired performance goals are too high that might result to low expectancy perceptions.
3. **Control** – the degree of a person’s perceived control over his performance.

Valence

Valence refers to the value that a person sets on the reinforcements or rewards. Setting values are usually based on an individual’s values, needs, goals and intrinsic or extrinsic sources of motivation. Valence include -1, which means the person is trying to avoid the outcome, 0, which means the person feels indifferent towards the results, and +1, which means that he welcomes the results.

Instrumentality

Instrumentality refers to the notion that a person will get a reward upon the satisfaction of the expected performance. The reward may present in various forms – it can be intrinsic or extrinsic, monetary or non-monetary. If this reward is similar for all the activities that a person must perform, instrumentality is said to be low. There are three factors influencing instrumentality: policies, control and trust.

Motivational Force

The product of the three aforementioned variables – expectancy, valence and instrumentality – is called the motivational force. This is the proper formula for motivational force:

Motivational Force (MF) = Expectancy x Instrumentality x Valence

If these three variables are “high” or strong in an individual, then his motivation is also greater.

Goal-Setting Theory

Another cognitive theory of motivation, the Goal-Setting Theory [3] was proposed by Edwin Locke in the 1960s. The theory explains that goal setting has an influence on task performance. Specific and challenging goals are more likely to motivate a person and lead to a better execution of tasks, whereas vague and easy goals may result to poor task performance. In application, therefore, the goals should be set must be SMART – Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic and Time-Bound.

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[1] <https://staging.explorables.com/cognitive-theories-of-motivation>

[2] <https://staging.explorables.com/users/sarah>

[3] <http://www.managementstudyguide.com/goal-setting-theory-motivation.htm>