
Intrinsic Motivation among Middle-level Management Employees – An Empirical Research

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Abstract

Gone are days where extrinsic motivators, such as pay alone were sufficient to keep employees happy and motivated. Many studies have already found that in addition to extrinsic motivators, intrinsic motivators are necessary to ensure that employees remain in the organisation. Previous researches proved that lower-level employees' need extrinsic motivators while for top management level, employees' intrinsic motivation plays important role to perform well and to be happy in the organisation, though at varied extents. In our country, substantial number of employees belong to middle level management. In this research, an analysis is done on the impact of intrinsic motivators - i.e., autonomy, competence and relatedness - on overall motivation. These are mentioned in the Self-Determination Theory (SDT). Questionnaire-based survey was used to examine the intrinsic motivational state of the middle level management employees working in companies from various sectors. Results of the study suggest that there are a strong impact of autonomy and relatedness components on overall motivation while competency component has less impact on overall motivation. The study also suggests that there is a strong impact of pay / remuneration on overall motivation.

Keywords : *Intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, self-determination, autonomy, competence, relatedness.*

Introduction

Employees are today considered as the most valuable assets for any organisation. Long term success of the organisations directly depends on how employees are involved in their work and committed to the organisation. An organisation for its success, needs such employees who work towards achieving the goals of the organization and have a strong desire to remain there.

Work motivation is defined as a set of energetic forces that originate both within as well as beyond an individual's being to initiate work-related behaviour and to determine its form, direction, intensity and

duration. It is a psychological process resulting from the interaction between the individual and the environment (Latham&Pinder, 2004).

There are three important terms in this definition. The first one is 'direction'. It refers to the path along which people engage their efforts. For example, employees may choose to work harder or may choose to finish the work faster or may choose to produce

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best quality product. Thus, they are choosing one or more directions. The second term used in the definition is 'intensity'. It is concerned with how hard a person tries. It refers to the amount of effort put towards a goal. For instance, two employees may have the intention to finish the job faster, but only one of them puts enough effort to achieve the goal. The final term used in the definition is 'duration' or 'persistence'. It refers to the continuing the effort for a certain amount of time. Some employees sustain their efforts until they reach their goals while others give up beforehand.

Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation

Motivation is of two types— intrinsic and extrinsic. Intrinsic motivation comes from within and is self-satisfying. Intrinsic rewards are positive emotional experience resulting directly and naturally from the individual's behaviour or results. Motivators like monetary and nonmonetary rewards cause extrinsic motivation.

The concept of intrinsic motivation emerged during 1950s from the work of Harlow and White in opposition to the behavioural studies that were dominant at that time (Deci&Vaansteenkiste,2004). Intrinsically motivated behaviours were defined as those that are not energized by physiological drives. For such intrinsically motivated behaviours, the reward is spontaneous satisfaction associated with the activity itself rather than with operationally separable consequences.

Self Determination Theory

SDT is a macro theory of human motivation, personality development, and well being. This theory stresses on intrinsic motivation and is based on empirical evidence.

SDT postulates a set of basic and universal psychological needs. These needs are:

- Need for autonomy
- Need for competence and
- Need for relatedness

The fulfilment of these is considered necessary and essential to vital, healthy human functioning regardless of culture or stage of development (Ryan,

2009). The need for autonomy refers to the experience of making a choice and feeling like 'initiator' of one's own actions. The need for competence is concerned with succeeding at optimally challenging tasks. And finally the need for relatedness is a sense of mutual respect and reliance with others.

According to Deci and Ryan, innate psychological needs for competence, relatedness, and autonomy frame the deep structure of the human psyche. Therefore, these are refer to innate and life-span tendencies toward achieving effectiveness, connectedness, and coherence. The presence versus absence of environmental conditions that allow satisfaction of these basic needs—in people's immediate situations and in their developmental histories—is thus a key predictor of whether or not people will display vitality and mental health (Deci& Ryan, 2000)

Literature Review

Deci and Ryan discusses the SDT concept of needs as it relates to the earlier need theories. They show that social contexts and individual differences that support satisfaction of basic needs, facilitate natural growth processes including intrinsically motivated behaviour and integration of extrinsic motivations whereas those that forestall autonomy, competence, or relatedness are associated with poorer motivation, performance and well-being. They conclude that the natural human propensities toward self-organization and an organized relation to a larger social structure are understood to require satisfaction of the three innate or fundamental psychological needs for competence, autonomy and relatedness. Thwarted satisfaction of these needs results invariably in negative functional consequences for mental health and often for ongoing persistence and performance. (Deci& Ryan, 2000).

The research paper by Dan N Stone, Stephanie M. Bryant and Benson Wier extends SDT to investigate the unreliability of financial incentives as motivators. They proposed and measured four financial need belief constructs namely, financial self-efficacy, financial autonomy, financial community—trust, and financial community support to measure the extent to which individuals value financial rewards for altruistic versus materialistic reasons. The results

largely support the extension of SDT to the financial domain. Specifically: (1) financial values partially mediate the effects of financial need beliefs on hedonic utility, and (2) financial altruism positively, and financial materialism negatively, predicts hedonic utility

In a pioneering research conducted by Vansteenkiste et al. (2007) on work value orientations, psychological need satisfaction and job outcomes using Self-determination theory approach, authors found that extrinsic work value orientation was associated with less positive outcomes, compared to that of intrinsic. Also, these relations were not limited to job outcomes, but also emerged as indicators of employees' general mental health. The researchers also found that holding an extrinsic relative to an intrinsic work value orientation was detrimental to employees' job outcomes.

The study further indicated that if materialistic work values occupy a more important place in employees' entire work value configuration, they experience more negative job outcomes rather than positive job outcomes and they are more likely to intend to leave their jobs. This is because the pursuit of extrinsic, relative to intrinsic, values are less likely to be associated with the satisfaction of employees' basic needs for autonomy, competence and relatedness.

Another interesting research was conducted on implicit and self-attributed motives by Todd M Thrash and Andrew J Elliot (2002). Implicit motives are affective associative networks rooted in mid-brain structures reflecting the phylogenetic heritage that human share with all animals. On the other hand, Self determined motives represents one's values that distinguishes humans from other animals. The research was conducted on the role of these two motives on achievement goals and the relation between these two motives. The study found that there were significant positive correlations between implicit and self-attributed need for achievement and between implicit and self-attributed fear of failure. The study further found that those individuals higher in self-determination were more concordant in implicit and self-attributed needs for achievement. The research also found that implicit and self-attributed achievement motives predicted achievement goals in similar manner.

A research conducted by SookNing Chua and Richard Koestner on the SDT perspective on the role of Autonomy in solitary behaviour, predicted and found that, on the basis of self-determination theory, when individuals spend time alone in a volitional and autonomous manner, they counterintuitively report lower levels of loneliness and higher levels of well-being (Chua & Koestner, 2008).

Most of the research based on SDT is done on psychological perspective. Very few studies have been conducted in organizational settings and that too in developing country like India. One such research was conducted by Durga Das Mundhra and Wallace Jacob where their target respondents were employees of manufacturing sector. Their study found that there is a strong link between intrinsic motivators and the performance of employees (Mundhra & Jacob, 2011).

Need for the study

Based on the literature review, observations and experience, it was felt that there was a need for research on intrinsic motivators on middle-level management employees working in urban areas of India. Reasons for choosing middle-level managers are as follows. They form the link between the top/senior management and lower level employees of the organisation. While they take full responsibility for any problems or issues faced by customers due to mistakes done by lower-level employees or due to bad decisions taken by top management, the credit for any process improvement or sales improvement often goes to top management and the credit for any good work at ground level goes to lower-level employees. Thus, often these individuals remain sandwiched between top management on upper edge and customer-facing employees on the lower edge. In spite of that, we find that middle-level managers show enthusiasm and look self-motivated and they act as an essential layer of any company turning top-line strategy into action. There is need to know how such mid-level management employees are intrinsically motivated. Hence, this research paper aimed at studying the impact of the three psychological needs (autonomy, competence and relatedness) on overall motivation of the middle-level management employees.

Methodology used

It was decided to conduct a survey to collect primary data. Questionnaire was developed which was used as the instrument for collecting the data. Samples included only **middle-level management employees** working in various sectors including IT, ITES, manufacturing, engineering services, retail, education, finance and healthcare industries. Some responses were collected through circulation of hard copies of the questionnaire and some responses were collected through mailed questionnaire. Data collected were analysed using Microsoft Excel and then results were interpreted. The conclusion was drawn based on the findings/ interpretation.

Questionnaire development

The figure below depicts the framework used for this research study.

The questionnaire consisted of (i) personal information and (ii) a total of 19 questions on intrinsic motivators, overall motivation and satisfaction with pay. Out of the 19 questions, 14 questions were related to intrinsic motivators, 4 questions were related to overall motivation and 1 question was related to satisfaction with the pay. A Likert scale of 1-5 (strongly disagree, disagree to some extent, neither agree nor disagree, agree to some extent and strongly agree) has been used in the questionnaire. The questionnaire was tested for internal consistency by calculating Cronbach's alpha (Table 2). The content validity of the questionnaire was ascertained in consultation with experts from both academics and industry. No open ended questions were asked.

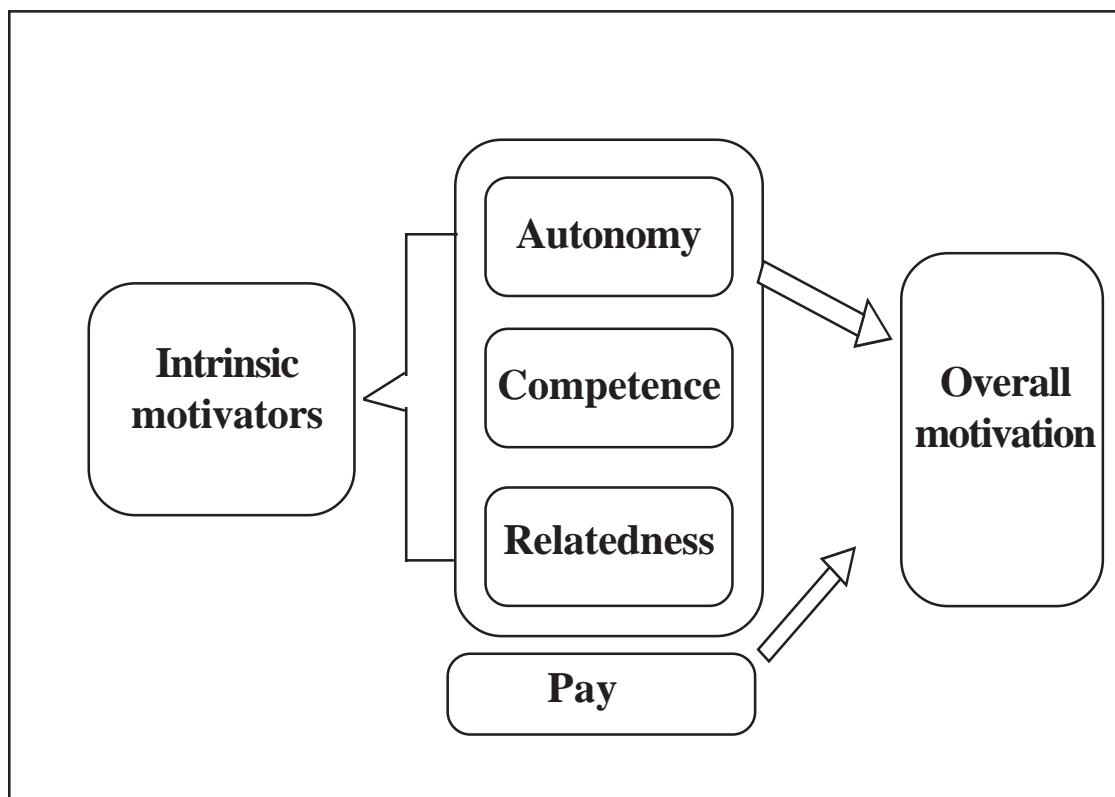


Figure 1: Framework of research

Profile of Respondents

Survey was conducted among middle-level executives working in Bangalore with at-least 3 years of experience and having designations like Engineers, Senior Executives, Assistant Managers, Managers, Senior Managers and Deputy Managers. These respondents were selected from companies such as IT, ITES, manufacturing, engineering services, retail, education, finance and healthcare industries.

A total of 134 responses were collected out of which 4 responses were incomplete and hence were discarded. The final sample size consisted of 130 middle-level executives. The profile of respondents were as given in the table 1.

Table 1. Profile of Respondents

Sample Profile		
Category	No. of Respondents	
Age (in years)	20-25	13
	25-30	52
	30-35	31
	35-40	19
	40 and above	15
Gender	Male	95
	Female	35
Total Work Experience (in years)	0-5 years	39
	5-10 years	45
	10-15 years	30
	15 years and above	16
Education	Post-Graduation	88
	Graduation	39
	Diploma	3

Reliability

To find out the reliability (internal consistency), Cronbach Alpha values of the following were determined:

- (i) three components (Autonomy, Competence and Relatedness),

- (ii) overall motivation and
- (iii) the whole Questionnaire

All values except for 'relatedness', were above 0.7 showing good reliability of the questionnaire. Cronbach's alpha value for 'Relatedness' was 0.64 which was acceptable internal consistency (Table 2).

Table 2. Internal consistency test

Sl. No.	Component (sub-scale)	Cronbach's Alpha Value
1	Autonomy	0.717
2	Competence	0.826
3	Relatedness	0.64
4	Overall Motivation	0.822
5	Overall Questionnaire	0.865

Components of Intrinsic Motivation

All the responses were compiled group-wise and mean value with standard deviation for the three intrinsic motivators and overall motivation was calculated and listed in Table 3 and Table 4.

The Table 3 shows that there is no specific pattern of mean values of autonomy, competence and relatedness as regards Age variable. However, in 'overall motivation' (Table 4) an interesting point to observe is that mean value for the initial age group

(i.e., at the age group 20-25) which gradually reduces till the age group 35 and then again starts to increase. This is expected because employees will be more motivated during their initial career which reduces gradually and then again starts to increase after a certain age (generally mid age).

Means of Competence is higher for females compared to males. For all other components, the mean values is higher for males.

Table 3. Intrinsic Motivators – Mean and SD Score

Intrinsic Motivators' Score		AUTONOMY		COMPETENCY		RELATEDNES	
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Category							
Age	20-25	3.71	0.62	4.37	0.52	3.81	0.56
	25-30	3.72	0.70	4.30	0.78	3.76	0.63
	30-35	3.63	0.73	4.49	0.43	3.79	0.77
	35-40	3.94	0.55	4.58	0.47	4.00	0.65
	40 and above	3.72	0.63	4.50	0.37	3.93	0.80
Gender	Male	3.76	0.65	4.40	0.66	3.86	0.70
	Female	3.63	0.74	4.46	0.43	3.74	0.65
Total Work Experience	0-5 year	3.79	0.71	4.40	0.55	3.85	0.60
	5-10 years	3.57	0.70	4.33	0.79	3.67	0.73
	10-15 years	3.87	0.66	4.53	0.43	3.90	0.71
	15 and above	3.77	0.44	4.50	0.39	4.08	0.60
Education	Post Graduation	3.70	0.71	4.40	0.65	3.89	0.70
	Graduation	3.79	0.61	4.44	0.52	3.69	0.68
	Diploma	3.89	0.42	4.67	0.31	3.75	0.20

Table 4. Overall motivation Score

Intrinsic Motivators and Overall motivation Score			
OVERALL MOTIVATION			
		Mean	SD
Category			
Age	20-25	3.71	0.81
	25-30	3.56	0.89
	30-35	3.45	0.97
	35-40	3.62	0.81
	40 and above	3.63	0.98
Gender	Male	3.61	0.85
	Female	3.45	1.03
Total Work Experience	0-5 year	3.73	0.86
	5-10 years	3.32	0.93
	10-15 years	3.64	0.94
	15 and above	3.72	0.71
Education	Post-Graduation	3.58	0.91
	Graduation	3.50	0.91
	Diploma	4.00	0.00

The mean values with regard to 'Total work experience' showed almost similar pattern as that of 'Age' which is quite obvious. That is, mean values are high in the beginning (i.e, during 0-5 years of work experience) and then reduces as experience increases and then again begins to increase as experience increase further (Autonomy and Competency is an exception in this case).

Also, there is no specific pattern of mean values of autonomy, competence and relatedness when it comes to Educational qualification of the respondents.

REGRESSION ANALYSIS

(Impact of Intrinsic motivators and Overall motivation)

The regression analysis with regard to intrinsic motivators and overall motivation is given in Table 5.

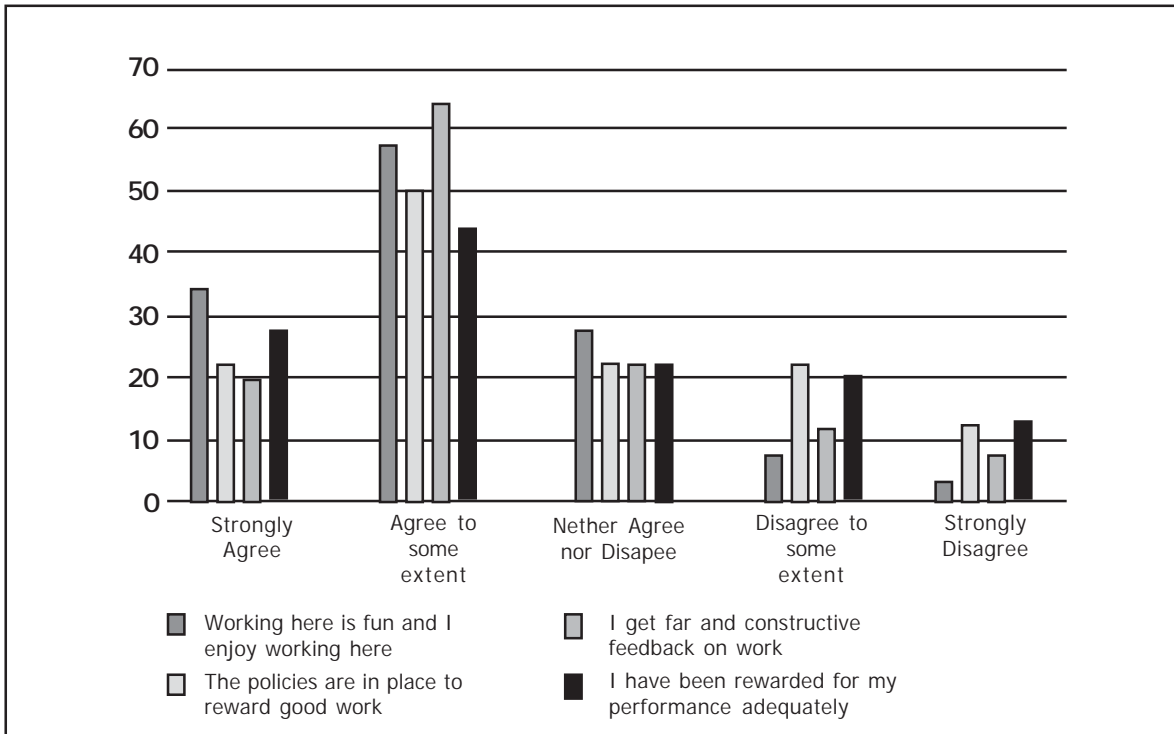
The results shows that competency is not significant component ($p 0.07$) for influencing the overall motivation. On the other hand perceived autonomy ($p 0.03$) and relatedness ($p 0.00$) has strong influence on the overall motivation.

Table 5. Regression analysis (Intrinsic motivators and overall motivation)

SUMMARY OUTPUT								
Regression Statistics								
Multiple R	0.729							
R Square	0.531							
Adjusted R Square	0.520							
Standard Error	0.630							
Observations	130							
ANOVA								
	df	SS	MS	F	Significance F			
Regression	3	56.514	18.838	47.538	1.28324E-20			
Residual	126	49.930	0.396					
Total	129	106.444						
95%	Coefficients	Standard Error	t Stat	P-value	Lower 95%	Upper 95%		
	Lower 95.0%			Upper 95.0%				
Intercept	0.155	0.466	0.332	0.740	-0.767	1.076	-0.767	1.076
AUTONOMY	0.304	0.100	3.053	0.003	0.107	0.502	0.107	0.502
COMPETENCY	-0.176	0.096	-1.827	0.070	-0.367	0.015	-0.367	0.015
RELATEDNESS	0.798	0.095	8.382	0.000	0.609	0.986	0.609	0.986

Overall Motivation and Pay

A) Response towards items of Overall Motivation



Overall Motivation and Pay

A) Response towards items of Overall Motivation

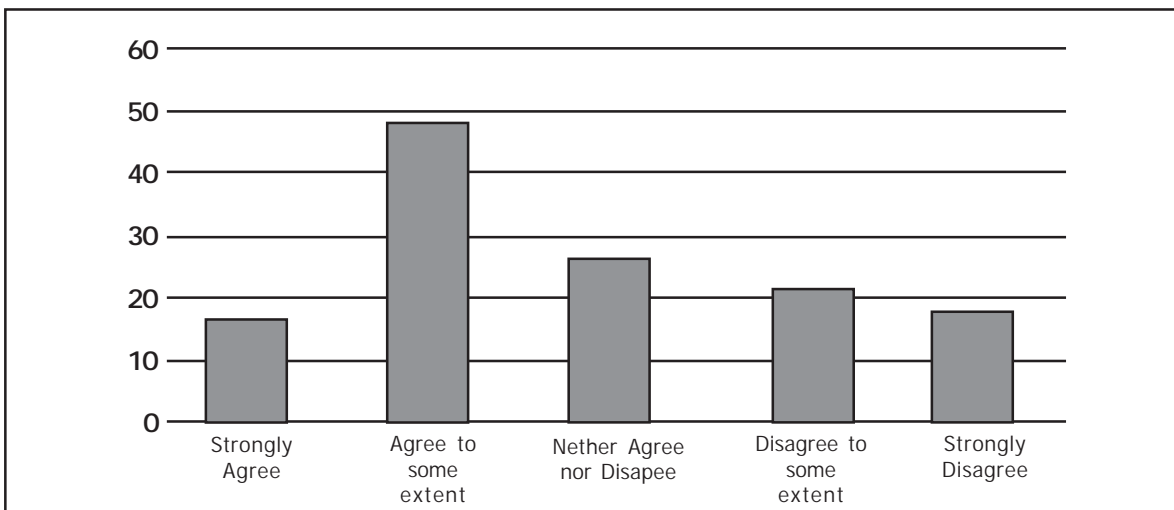


Table 6. Regression analysis (Impact of satisfaction with Pay on Overall Motivation)

SUMMARY OUTPUT

<i>Regression Statistics</i>								
Multiple R	0.545							
R Square	0.297							
Adjusted R Square	0.291							
Standard Error	0.765							
Observations	130							
ANOVA								
	<i>df</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Significance F</i>			
Regression	1	31.57	31.57	53.96	2.12E-11			
Residual	128	74.88	0.58					
Total	129	106.44						
<i>Coefficients</i>		<i>Standard Error</i>		<i>t Stat</i>	<i>P-value</i>	<i>Lower 95%</i>		
<i>Upper 95%</i>			<i>Lower 95.0%</i>			<i>Upper 95.0%</i>		
Intercept	2.296	0.185	12.38	1.1808E-23	1.929	2.663	1.929	2.663
PAY	0.402	0.055	7.34	2.11977E-11	0.294	0.511	0.294	0.511

Conclusion

The results showed that there is no specific pattern of mean values of autonomy, competence and relatedness when it comes to Age or Educational qualification. However, means of competence is higher for females compared to males. For other components (i.e., autonomy and relatedness), the mean values is higher for males.

Autonomy, competence and relatedness – which form the three intrinsic motivators do not show the same influence on overall motivation. Competence of employees has less influence on their overall motivation. On the other hand, perceived relatedness and autonomy has strong influence on overall motivation. When it comes to satisfaction with pay/ remuneration, the results indicated that this component has high influence on the overall motivation.

Competence, being less significant for overall motivation does not mean that it should be neglected as part of intrinsic motivation. Means of competence are higher for all categories (age, gender, education and total work experience) when compared to that of autonomy and relatedness. Most respondents felt that they have the competence to accomplish the task given where as their motivation level does not say so.

Pay/ remuneration is another important component which strongly influences the overall motivation. It is obvious that employees will be more motivated when they are satisfied with the pay/ remuneration.

Further studies may be conducted to check to what extent the satisfaction with pay influences the overall motivation level. Also, more studies may be conducted to know what other (and to what extent) extrinsic motivators other than pay influences the overall motivation level. More studies may be conducted to know whether SDT is sufficient to explain the influence on overall motivation. Similarly more studies may be conducted to check the validity of SDT at other levels of management in our country.

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