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Perceptions, Attitudes and Motivation: A Case of Mr Simon's Disillusionment

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ABSTRACT

This case study explores the interplay of perceptions, attitudes, and motivation in addressing employee disillusionment, focusing on Mr. Simon's career stagnation in a retail organization. Despite 12 years of dedicated service, Mr. Simon's lack of promotion has led to diminished job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and motivation. The study examines his situation through some theoretical lenses such as Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, Equity Theory, and Expectancy Theory. It highlights how perceptions of inequity, unmet expectations, and career stagnation contribute to his disillusionment. The analysis underscores the role of management psychology in addressing motivational deficits through tailored interventions like career development plans, job redesign, and recognition systems. Practical strategies for re-engaging employees include transparent communication, structured growth opportunities, and fostering a culture of fairness. The study concludes that integrating insights from multiple motivational theories can rebuild trust, enhance engagement, and retain valuable employees while promoting organizational success. This research emphasizes the importance of aligning employee needs with organizational practices to create a supportive workplace that values both experience and formal qualifications.

Keywords: Perception, Attitudes, Motivation, Management Practice, Management Psychology

INTRODUCTION

Employee motivation is a critical aspect of management practice. This is because it is a factor that influences productivity and organizational success. When discussing management practice, management psychology comes to bear. Management psychology, of course, places premium on employee needs and creates a supportive environment to foster engagement. Mr. Simon's situation, characterized by repeated lack of promotion despite continuous service, illustrates key challenges in maintaining employee motivation and loyalty (Khuong et al., 2020).

Bawa (2017) highlighted the perceived lack of opportunities that diminish job satisfaction, reduce work commitment, and increase turnover. This accounts for one of the academic literatures that concerns management practice. Motivation techniques such as setting achievable goals with rewards, mentorship programs, and fostering a positive workspace can improve employee performance (Chartered Management Institute, 2015).

Chartered Management Institute, (2015) highlighted the opportunities for training and development, flexible working hours, and greater employee involvement as contributing to a motivated team. Studies

show that UK employee motivation lags behind the global average, with only 60% of UK employees motivated to work above and beyond their roles (Rozen, 2014).

This case study examines how management practices impact employee motivation, particularly focusing on career development and recognition. It seeks to identify effective strategies for re-engaging disillusioned employees like Mr. Simon, promoting a culture of fairness, and enhancing overall organizational performance. Addressing these factors is essential for retaining experienced employees and fostering a positive and productive work environment (Bawa, 2017).

While Mr Simon's career stagnation can be understood within the ambit of theories of perception, attitudes, and motivation, invaluable insights from his plight can be gained in the gamut of actionable organizational efforts to re-engage him due to his essential contributions to the retail organization. These actions are in the garb of structured analysis and proposed interventions replete in management psychology. These interventions include a career development plan, incentives or career wage awards or bonuses, career redesign and some other alternatives available to the organization to keep one of their most performing staffers and, at the same, keep to the organisation's objectives that are reliant on qualification.

Clarification of Concepts

Concepts such as management practice and management psychology; words like perception, attitude and motivation have their meanings buzzed and must be clarified in the context and analysis of this study.

Management practice refers to the methods and innovations managers use to improve organizational efficiency and effectiveness. According to Eze (2012), practices encompass a range of activities, procedures, and strategies designed to achieve organizational objectives. According to the author, actions to prevent environmental damage are practices to control erosion and water quality, or improve work systems. These practices include providing economic incentives, giving regular feedback, treating employees with respect, training managers, supporting employees, acknowledging emotions, leading by example, and keeping up with new technologies (Luenendonk, 2017). Eze (2012) opined that effective management practices motivate employees to produce results and achieve company goals.

In this analysis, "improving organisational efficiency and effectiveness," "improve work systems" describe the context within which management practice applies. Here, Mr Simon's futile promotion attempts and job dissatisfaction needs improvement within the management of the retail organisation. This will ensure continuity of service, smooth running and success of the organisation.

Management psychology is closely related to practice. It is believed to have evolved during the Industrial Revolution, when the work environment became complex and hazardous, initial research on management psychology gave credence to organizational structure, employee motivation, and job satisfaction (Chester, 2014). Management psychology is the application of psychological principles to understanding and managing people in organizations (American Psychological Association 2025). It is a multidisciplinary field drawing from organizational, industrial-organizational, cognitive, and social psychology (Hodson, (2013). Its focus is on improving organizational performance by understanding how people think, feel, and act in the workplace. It deals with the mental processes and behaviours of managers and employees and their impact on decision-making, motivation, leadership, and group functioning in the work environment (British Academy for Training 2018).

Perception Analysis

In Mr. Simon's situation, perception- the cognitive process through which he interprets and assigns meaning to workplace events- plays a pivotal role in shaping his reactions to repeated promotion rejections. Based on Mr. Simon's experience, four angles could be advanced from perception in academic practice.

1. **Equity Perception:** According to Herzberg (1966), Mr. Simon perceives an imbalance in the input-output ratio of his employment relationship. His 12 years of experience (input) contrasts with the lack of promotion (output), while colleagues with stronger formal qualifications (input) receive advancement. This mirrors Adams' Equity Theory, where perceived inequity generates frustration and demotivation (Adams, 1965).

2. **Selective Perception:** He selectively focuses on the promotion criteria favouring qualifications over experience, filtering out potential counter-narratives. For instance; organizational efforts to retain him. This confirmation bias reinforces his belief that advancement is unattainable, creating a cycle of disillusionment (Robbins, 2019).
3. **Social Comparison:** By comparing himself to promoted peers, Mr. Simon perceives his career trajectory as stagnant relative to others. Festinger's Social Comparison Theory explains how such comparisons amplify feelings of inadequacy, despite his tenure (Festinger, 1954).
4. **Self-Fulfilling Prophecy:** His declaration, "no possibility of advancement," reflects a perceptual shift in which expectations of failure influence his behaviour (e.g., reduced engagement). This mind set risks becoming a reality if unaddressed; Merton (1948) prophesied may lower motivation and further diminish his promotion prospects. This perceptual framework underscores how Mr. Simon's interpretation of events, rather than objective reality alone, drives his disillusionment. Addressing these perceptions requires transparent communication about promotion criteria and efforts to validate his experiential contributions.

Mr. Simon's repeated promotion rejections have shaped his perception of organizational equity and career mobility. His belief that formal "qualifications outweigh experience" according to Indeed Editorial Team (2025), creates a self-fulfilling prophecy of stagnation, exacerbated by confirmation bias after three failed attempts. The promotion process's perceived rigidity (prioritizing credentials over tenure and personnel performance marking) likely fuels his disillusionment, as he interprets the outcomes as systemic disregard for his contributions (Hussainy & Al-Wahaibi, 2022).

Key Factors and Analyses of the Situation

Selective perception: Fixation on qualification-based rejections overshadows his strengths in experience.

Social comparison: Observing peers with fewer years of service advancing intensifies feelings of inequity (Crawley, n.d).

Attitude Dynamics

Mr. Simon's job satisfaction and organizational commitment have eroded, manifesting in cynicism ("no possibility of advancement"). This aligns with cognitive dissonance theory, where unmet expectations (promotion despite loyalty) clash with reality, triggering demotivation (Crawley, n.d). His public declaration of intent to leave signals psychological withdrawal, a precursor to turnover (Indeed Editorial Team, 2024).

Critical Attitude Shifts

Affective component: Frustration and resentment toward perceived unfairness.

Behavioural intent: Reduced engagement and active job-seeking behaviour.

Key Components of Mr. Simon's attitudes are advanced below

In Mr. Simon's situation, attitude encapsulates his feelings, beliefs, and behavioural tendencies towards his job and the organization, shaped significantly by his repeated lack of promotion. Below are key components of Mr. Simon's attitudes are advanced below.

1. **Job Satisfaction:** Mr. Simon's job satisfaction has likely declined due to his perceived career stagnation. The unmet expectations and lack of advancement opportunities contribute to this dissatisfaction (Chan et al., 2014).
2. **Organizational Commitment:** Page, (2025) emphasised that commitment to the organization is waning, evident in Mr. Simon's statement about leaving. This reduced commitment is a response to the perceived lack of growth and recognition.
3. **Work Motivation:** Mr. Simon's motivation is negatively affected as he feels his hard work is not valued or reciprocated by the organization. This aligns with Chan et al., (2014) concept that employees at a career plateau may feel that they cannot get promoted even if they work hard, which leads to slackness and affects their work performance.
4. **Feelings of Injustice:** Mr. Simon likely experiences a sense of injustice, believing that his contributions and experience are not adequately rewarded compared to colleagues with better

formal qualifications. Adams (1965) observes that inequity in social exchange further reinforced this perception of unfairness, which further decreased work efficiency and motivation.

5. **Behavioural Intentions:** His statement, “It is time I moved on,” indicates a clear intention to leave the organization. This intention is a behavioural component of his attitude, reflecting his readiness to seek employment elsewhere due to his current dissatisfaction and perceived lack of opportunities (Page, 2025).

Theoretical Framework

This study is hinged on two outstanding theories, equity and motivation, underlie the attitude formation perspective. These theories underscore the role attitude plays in shaping how individuals like Simon behave in their workplace.

Equity Theory by Adam Stacy J in 1960

The Equity Theory was propounded in 1960 by Adam J Stacy, an American psychologist. The theory suggests that individuals strive for fairness and balance in their relationships, including the workplace. This implies that people compare their outputs (efforts) and outcomes (rewards) to those of others and feelings of inequity can lead to dissatisfaction or motivation to restore balance.

According to equity theory, as emphasized by Chan et al., (2014), employees expect to be treated fairly, and when they feel they are not, their attitude toward work and performance can become negative. Hence, Mr. Simon’s attitude is influenced by his perception of fairness within the organization.

Stagnation and Motivation

Marti (2025) posited that employee stagnation, stemming from a lack of growth opportunities, is a significant factor in Mr. Simon’s declining motivation and negative attitude. The author averred that when employees are stuck, they will move to a role that meets their interests and expectations.

In Mr. Simon’s situation, motivation refers to the psychological processes that direct his behaviour toward specific goals or outcomes within the workplace (Walker, 2024). His current state reflects a decline in these processes, directly impacting his engagement and productivity. Here is a breakdown of key motivational factors that probably influence Mr. Simon’s decision.

Herzberg’s Two-Factor Theory 1959

The Herzberg Two-Factor Theory was propounded by Frederick Herzberg in 1959. The theory posits that job satisfaction and dissatisfaction are influenced by two separate factors: motivators (satisfiers) and hygiene factors (dissatisfiers).

According to Walker (2024), the absence of motivators such as recognition and promotion opportunities has led to dissatisfaction. While Mr. Simon may have adequate hygiene factors (salary, working conditions), the lack of motivators diminishes his job satisfaction and overall motivation.

Expectancy Theory by Victor Vroom (1964)

The Expectancy Theory was propounded by Victor Vroom, a Canadian psychologist in 1964. The theory assumes that motivation is influenced by an individual’s expectation of achieving a certain outcome and the valence (value) they place on that outcome.

Mr. Simon’s expectancy (belief that effort leads to performance) and instrumentality (belief that performance leads to desired outcomes) are low (Sinclair, 2025). Repeated rejections for promotion have eroded his confidence that his efforts will result in advancement, thus reducing his motivation.

Career Stagnation

Career stagnation refers to a state of where an individual’s career progress seems too have halted or slowed significantly. This can manifest as feeling stuck in a role, lacking opportunities for advancement or experiencing a mismatch between personal goals and current job responsibilities. Shabbir et al., (2020) posit that remaining in the same role without progression for an extended period has resulted in career stagnation, which significantly impacts motivation. They held that career stagnation is defined as working in the same position for years without any kind of development in your profile. This lack of career growth diminishes Mr. Simon’s sense of self-worth and reduces his drive to perform.

Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy means an individual's belief in their ability to succeed in specific situations or accomplish a specific task. Mr. Simon's belief in his ability to succeed (self-efficacy) may also be weakened. The repeated failure to secure a promotion despite his experience could undermine his confidence in his skills and abilities, leading to decreased motivation.

Intrinsic vs. Extrinsic Motivation

While Mr. Simon may have initially been motivated by intrinsic factors (enjoyment of his work), the lack of extrinsic rewards (promotion, recognition) has overshadowed these (Sinclair, 2025). His statement about leaving indicates a shift toward seeking external validation and opportunities for advancement elsewhere.

Need for Achievement

Drawing from McClelland's Need Theory, Mr. Simon's need for achievement is unmet, as he is not attaining important life goals, personal achievements, and happiness (Shabbir et al., 2020).

Analyses of Practical Applicability of Motivation Theory for Managers/Leaders

Motivation theories offer valuable frameworks for managers and leaders to understand and inspire their teams (Indeed Editorial Team, 2025). By applying these theories, managers can create strategies that enhance motivation, improve productivity, and foster a fulfilling work environment.

1. **Understanding Employee Needs:** Nagar, (2024) explained that theories like Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs help managers identify and address employees' needs, from basic physiological requirements to self-actualization. By meeting these needs, organizations can foster a motivated and productive workforce. The author opined that Google, for example, provides free meals and wellness programs to meet basic needs while also offering opportunities for professional growth to satisfy higher-level needs.
2. **Tailoring Incentives and Rewards:** The study carried out by the Indeed Editorial Team (2023) suggests that incentive theory emphasizes that reinforcement, recognition, incentives, and rewards can motivate people. Managers can also use bonuses, praise, training opportunities, and promotions to encourage desired behaviours and outcomes (Nagar, 2024). It is suggestive that customizing rewards for individual employees or departments can also increase their effectiveness.
3. **Enhancing Job Satisfaction:** Stennett (2023) in Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory distinguishes between hygiene factors (e.g., salary, working conditions) and motivators (e.g., recognition, achievement). Addressing both sets of factors can lead to increased job satisfaction and motivation (Nagar, 2024).
4. **Fostering a Sense of Fairness:** Equity Theory as explained by Nagar (2024) emphasized the importance of balance between an individual's inputs (e.g., work, skill) and outcomes (e.g., rewards, recognition) in relation to others. Hence, when employees perceive fairness, they are more likely to be motivated. While a lack of certificates may hinder successful career growth and development, perceived unfairness compared to promoted colleagues doubts the organisation's transparency, which affects employees' confidence and spirit (Crawley, n.d). This could be mitigated through non-monetary recognition (e.g., "Employee of the Month") or lateral moves with skill-building opportunities.
5. **Aligning Efforts with Rewards:** Extrapolating from the above strand of explanation, Expectancy Theory posits that people are motivated when they believe their efforts will lead to positive outcomes (Nagar, 2024). Managers can ensure that employees understand the connection between their performance, efforts, and rewards. The implication is that Mr. Simon's expectancy (effort cum performance) and instrumentality (performance cum reward) are low due to repeated failures (Indeed Editorial Team, 2023). Transparent feedback on skill gaps and a clear pathway to promotion could rebuild trust in the process.
6. **Identifying Motivational Drivers:** Stennett (2023), in a study on McClelland's theory of needs identified three motivational drivers: achievement, affiliation, and power. He reiterated that understanding which driver is dominant in each employee can help managers tailor their approach. Mr. Simon's need for achievement is unmet, as his efforts have not translated into advancement

(Indeed Editorial Team, 2023). Tailoring his role to include goal-oriented projects (e.g., process optimization) could reignite intrinsic motivation.

Gleaned from the analysis, it is worthy of note that Mr Simon's situation could best be explained using motivation theories. This is because the study is dealing with someone who is disillusioned by work practice and is on the verge of losing his job. Yet, his integral knowledge of the job offers the retail organisation a tough choice of retaining Mr Simon's services. Consequently, building independent opinions on Mr. Simon's situation becomes essential to evaluate the merits and drawbacks of applying different motivation theories. Each is unique and addresses an issue; however, they are not in their right, perfect. They have drawbacks which make it impossible to integrate them in the context and analysis of Mr Simon's situation. The assessment below is on a theory-case basis.

Evaluating Relative Merits and Drawbacks of Opposing Academic Viewpoints

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

Walker (2024) and the Indeed Editorial Team (2025), have developed merits and drawbacks that underlie and undergird Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs.

Merits: This theory helps understand Mr. Simon's unmet needs. His basic needs (physiological, safety) are likely met through his job, but his higher-level needs (esteem, self-actualization) are not, due to the lack of promotion.

Drawbacks: It's a rigid hierarchy. Mr. Simon may not necessarily need to fulfil all lower-level needs completely before seeking higher-level ones. Also, it may be too broad to address his specific motivational issues.

Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory

Nagar's (2024) understanding of Herzberg's Two Factors inspired the merits and demerits inherent in the twin theory.

Merits: It distinguishes between hygiene factors (which prevent dissatisfaction) and motivators (which create satisfaction). The lack of promotion acts as a hygiene factor causing dissatisfaction, while absent motivators deepens disengagement.

Drawbacks: It may oversimplify job satisfaction. Other factors beyond hygiene and motivators could influence Mr. Simon's motivation.

Expectancy Theory

Both Nagar (2024) and the Indeed Editorial Team (2025) reasoned about the merits and drawbacks of the expectancy theory.

Merits: This theory explains that motivation is high when an individual believes that effort will lead to good performance and that good performance will lead to a valued reward²³. Mr. Simon's expectancy (effort → performance) and instrumentality (performance → reward) are low due to repeated failures.

Drawbacks: It assumes individuals are rational decision-makers, which may not always be the case. Emotional factors could also play a significant role in Mr. Simon's motivation.

Equity Theory

Nagar (2024) alone subsumed himself in the equity theory and made a clear distinction between the merits and the drawbacks.

Merits: This theory focuses on the balance between an individual's inputs (like work and skill) and outcomes (like rewards and recognition) in relation to others. Mr. Simon likely feels inequity compared to promoted colleagues.

Drawbacks: Perceptions of equity are subjective and may be difficult to measure or address objectively.

Competence Theory

Merits: People want to demonstrate their skills, intelligence, and abilities, and if Mr. Simon successfully demonstrates his intelligence in front of his peers, it can motivate him to feel competent in a particular area (Indeed Editorial Team 2025).

Drawbacks: This relies on the employee's ability to demonstrate intelligence in front of peers and receive recognition, which might not always be possible.

Building Independent Opinions

Combine Theories: Instead of relying on a single theory, integrate insights from multiple theories. For example, address basic needs (Maslow), provide motivators (Herzberg), ensure fair rewards (Equity Theory), and clarify the path to promotion (Expectancy Theory) (Walker, 2024; Nagar, 2024; & Indeed Editorial Team 2025).

Individualize Approaches: Recognize that Mr. Simon's needs and preferences are unique. Tailor motivational strategies to align with his specific circumstances (Walker, 2024).

Consider Context: The Indeed Editorial Team (2025) accounts for the organizational culture, management style, and available resources when implementing motivational strategies.

Seek Feedback: Engage in open communication with Mr. Simon to understand his perspective and adjust strategies accordingly.).

Long-Term View: Recognize that motivation is an ongoing process. Regularly assess and adapt strategies to sustain Mr. Simon's engagement and commitment.

Overall Positive Interventions on Mr Simon's Situation

1. Career Development Plan

Sponsor certifications or courses to bridge qualification gaps, aligning with competence theory (Indeed Editorial Team, 2025). A classic example is the introduction of the Career Development and Progression Plan (CDPP) by the Nigeria Customs Service, where officers of outstanding qualities and performance are promoted irrespective of qualification and selected to undergo training to broaden their skills.

Create an individualized growth roadmap with milestones for advancement. Here, too, there is room in the Nigeria Customs Service where officers employed with school certifications are given study leave upon application to further their studies in line with the courses relevant to the work.

2. Job Redesign

Introduce autonomy in decision-making or cross-departmental projects to enhance task significance (Herzberg's motivators) (Indeed Editorial Team, 2023).

3. Recognition Systems

Publicly acknowledge tenure and expertise through awards or leadership roles (e.g., training new managers), leveraging incentive theory (Indeed Editorial Team, 2023; Indeed Editorial Team, 2025).

4. Transparent Dialogue

Conduct stay interviews to address concerns and co-create solutions, reducing perceived organizational indifference (Indeed Editorial Team, 2024).

5. Alternative Pathways

The alternative pathways underscore that organizations develop a technical track for experienced employees to advance without managerial duties, satisfying McClelland's achievement needs (Crawley, S., n.d). To further buttress the idea, Mr. Muaza has been given a double promotion due to his integrity test, when he turned down a bribe from a trader during a good's declaration on the system. This, alternatively, puts Mr. Muazu on par with his colleagues with higher qualifications.

CONCLUSION

Mr. Simon's attitude is a critical factor influencing his current performance and future intentions within the organisation. It is driven by job satisfaction, organizational commitment, perceived injustice, and motivational deficits linked to career stagnation. Addressing these attitudinal components is essential to re-engage him and retain his skills.

Mr. Simon's disillusionment stems from misaligned perceptions, eroding attitudes, and poorly addressed motivational drivers. By applying theories like Herzberg's Two-Factor Model and Expectancy Theory, the organization can rebuild his trust through structural clarity, skill investment, and recognition. Proactive measures not only retain his expertise but also reinforce a culture valuing experiential growth alongside formal credentials.

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