



## Faculties' Perceive Job Motivation beyond their Self-Interests: Emphasis on Community-Based Motivators

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### ABSTRACT

**Aims** Motivation is increasing the feeling of attachment and involvement in a workplace. In the field of medicine, in which the lives of individuals are at stake, motivation of faculties, who are at the same time, educators and also physicians, becomes more critical. The aim of this research was to explore the medical faculties' perceive motivation in their academic lifework.

**Participants & Methods** In this research was adopted a qualitative method by semi-structured interviewing 33 medicine faculties at Tehran University of Medical Sciences. The Braun and Clark's thematic analysis approach was used for data analysis to identify themes related to visible and invisible motivators in an academic lifework.

**Findings** It was identified two major themes after analyzing the interviews: "Enterprise-level and visible motivators", and "Community-level and invisible motivators". It was also identified five sub-themes: "Perceived need for authority and justice in scientific activities", "Financial motives", "Incentive system (tangible and intangible support) of academic activities", "Perceived need for a complementary atmosphere", and "Perceived need for a collaborative atmosphere".

**Conclusion** Faculties' perception of job motivation goes beyond visible, self-interest, and enterprise level motivators. They also perceive community-level factors of working at complementary and collaborative atmosphere as major motivators.

**Keywords** Motivation; Faculty; Medical Education

### CITATION LINKS

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## Introduction

Motivation of the faculties is an essential part of any higher education system in order to improve productivity within the system. As human assets, faculties are major resources of a higher education system<sup>[1]</sup>, and a driving force behind all types of transformation. As Bentley *et al.* explain a high quality academic staff is the source of successful education system<sup>[2]</sup>.

In the field of medicine, in which the lives of individuals are at stake, motivation of faculties, who are at the same time, educators and also physicians, becomes more critical. Any educational administrator at the field of medicine needs to identify the best methods of increasing faculties' motivation so they can develop proper attitudes and motivations. This will eventually end in better services by faculties. Considering this matter, this research a scholarly effort to understand the main motivators of medicine faculties at work, and that how they affect educational productivity and process of learning at schools is very crucial in improving of educational services.

This study is based on the McClelland Iceberg Model that classifies work motivators into visible and invisible factors. However, our study differentiates itself in the literature by qualitatively exploring motivation of medicine faculties and context-based invisible and visible factors of their motivation at work. The value-added theoretical contribution of this research is expanding the McClelland Theory of work motivation by focusing current thinking toward context-based invisible and visible factors. Both theory and empirical findings of this research contribute to our understanding of work motivation in educational contexts, especially in medicine field that the lives of humanity is at stake.

Motivation can be studied based on a series of relationships between dependent and independent variables to explain the behavior of an individual. Motivation is increasing the feeling of attachment and involvement in a workplace<sup>[3]</sup>. There are many different theories of motivation; such as the hierarchy of needs theory (Maslow 1970), Need to Achieve Theory (Murray, cited by Franken 1988), Expectancy value Theory (Atkinson 1966), Self-determination theory (SDT) (Deci & Ryan 1985), Attribution Theory (Weiner 1974), Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) (Pandora 1986, 1989), Goal Theory (Pintrich 2000), and Achievement Motivation Need Theory (McClelland, 1961)<sup>[3-6]</sup>. Most of the above-mentioned theories explain problems on the basis of the level of motivation.

The theoretical foundation of this paper is the McClelland Achievement Motivation Need Theory. He identifies three motivators: a need for achievement, a need for affiliation, and a need for power. He believes that these motivators are learned and all individuals, regardless of their gender,

culture or age have these motivators. However, he believes that one of these motivating drivers is a dominant motivating driver. McClelland proposes an Iceberg Model in which he classifies motivators into visible and invisible forces. Knowledge and skills are visible motivators; while opinions and values; and qualities and driving factors are invisible motivators. With no doubt staff motivation could impact academic staff teaching performance as well as their research performance<sup>[7]</sup>. Machado-Taylor *et al.* argue that motivation among academic staffs have a significant impact on the quality of an institution and students' learning<sup>[8]</sup>. Several scholars, such as Herzberg *et al.* have conceptualized motivators with contextual factors<sup>[9]</sup>.

Many studies have been conducted to classify motivators. While some categorize them into internal and external factors<sup>[10, 11]</sup>; others have classified them into intrinsic and extrinsic<sup>[12-14]</sup>, or visible and invisible motivators<sup>[4]</sup>. However, most studies have highlighted job satisfaction more than job motivation. And most studies have studied motivation of students in medicine field rather than medicine faculties. One other finding is that the literature has linked job motivation and job satisfaction. For instance, in one study about conceptual framework for academic job satisfaction, Hagedorn links academic job satisfaction to two constructs of mediators and triggers. She defines mediators as interacting factors that provide the context of job satisfaction; while she defines triggers as work or non-work events affecting one's reference point<sup>[15]</sup>. As we mentioned earlier, previous studies have referred to motivation as internal and external. Internal motivators can be needs and goals<sup>[16]</sup>, motives and drives<sup>[17]</sup>. Motivation is defined as an internal factor that energizes people to achieve a goal<sup>[16-18]</sup>. On the other hand, external motivators are linked with self-interest and economic achievement of faculties as they only pursue what is good for their individual achievement<sup>[17]</sup>.

In Iran, several studies have been conducted on the motivation of faculty member but few of them were based on the McClelland's Iceberg Model<sup>[19]</sup>. Most studies have identified external and internal factors affecting job motivation of Iranian faculty members<sup>[20]</sup>. Based on these studies, 81% of faculty members believed that external factors, and 72% of them considered internal factors as major motivators generating effective job motivation. According to these studies, the importance of external factors, such as salary, occupational safety, work environment conditions or discipline in workplace is more emphasized at the literature compared to the internal factors including the nature of job, appreciation of personnel, or job success. According to these studies, people enjoy exciting jobs more than boring and stationary ones,

as they have higher performance in their work if their job is more exciting. Team working is also one of the other noticeable factors impacting motivation of the faculty member<sup>[21-25]</sup>. The aim of this research was to shed light on the perception of medicine faculties regarding context-based work motivators in Iran through a qualitative study.

### Participants and Methods

The method of this research is qualitative and the theoretical framework of the research is based on the McClelland Iceberg Model. This research was conducted among faculties of Tehran University of Medical Sciences (TUMS) in 2016. To be included in the sample, faculty members should be a tenure track faculty member of TUMS. In total, 33 Persian-speaking faculty member between the ages of 25 and 60 years old were recruited from TUMS, of which 25 individuals were clinician faculty, and 8 individuals were nonclinical faculty. These samples were selected by purposive sampling method.

To encourage disclosure and to ensure that participants feel comfortable discussing their experiences, we asked them open-ended questions in an anonymous way. The researchers interviewed the faculties face to face and each interview lasted about 30 to 40 minutes.

We designed a semi-structured interview questions by incorporating the findings of the previous literature on motivation and education. Because of the exploratory nature of the research, the two questions on motivation were kept open to allow faculty members to share their viewpoints and experiences broadly and with no restriction. We also asked a series of open-ended and closed-ended questions regarding the demographics, field of specialty, academic degree, work experience, department and school of the participants. The two open-ended questions of the research were: 1) 'What invisible factors motivate you to work as a faculty member of the school in order to improve your educational activities?', and 2) 'Based on your experiences, how you perceive visible motivators of your working life in order to improve your educational activities?'

We informed the participants that the study has Ethical approval of the Ethical Boards of Tehran University of Medical Sciences. We interviewed faculties at their offices. At the end of the questionnaire, we also asked the participants to share their contact details (telephone and email) so we could be able to follow-up if they have any queries or need more information about the study. After analyzing data, the results of the study were sent to the email of all participants, and they were encouraged to send us their comments anonymously.

Participants provided between 1 (seven words: Accountability of university manager as an external

motivator!) to 11 lines (150 words) of text in answer to each question, with an average of four lines of text.

We used the Braun and Clark's thematic analysis approach for analysis of our data to identify themes related to visible and invisible motivators in an academic lifework, to capture participant's perspectives, and to allow an in-depth analysis of data<sup>[26]</sup>. Data were described, summarized and then interpreted in relation to broader implications. After transcribing the interviews, an initial set of codes was developed and then a thematic map presenting the themes and sub-themes was developed. We were ensured that the coding was checked and that nothing has been overlooked. We then named the themes and sub-themes. We cross-checked the set of themes. The authors were engaged in reflexive analysis throughout the process of analyzing the data, following Willig<sup>[27]</sup>. We sent back the article to the participants to re-check the accuracy of the quotes, and all respondents approved the quotes.

### Findings

The individual characteristics of the participants have been presented in Table 1.

**Table 1)** Absolute and relative frequency distribution of demographic variables in participants (N=33)

Variables	Number	Percentage
<b>Academic Degree</b>		
MSc	4	12.1
PhD & MD	21	63.6
PhD fellowships	8	24.2
<b>Academic Rank</b>		
Assistant Professor	21	63.6
Associated Professor	10	30.3
Full Professor	2	6.1
<b>Work Experience</b>		
1-5 years	12	36.4
5-10 years	10	30.3
More than 10 years	11	33.3
<b>Department</b>		
Clinical	25	75.8
Non-Clinical	8	24.2
<b>Faculty</b>		
Health	4	12.1
Medicine	13	39.4
Nursing & midwifery	4	12.1
Para-medicine	2	6.1
Pharmacy	4	12.1
Dental	4	12.1
Biomedicine	2	6.1

It was identified two major themes after analyzing the interviews: "Enterprise-level and visible motivators", and "Community-level and invisible motivators". It was also identified five sub-themes: "Perceived need for authority and justice in scientific activities", "Financial motives", "Incentive system (tangible and intangible support) of academic activities", "Perceived need for a complementary

atmosphere", and "Perceived need for a collaborative atmosphere" (Table 2).

**Table 2)** Motivation factors affecting academic performance from TUMS faculty member's perspective

Major themes and sub-themes
<p><b>• Enterprise-level (visible motivators)</b></p> <p><b>1- Perceived Need for authority and justice in scientific activities</b></p> <p>Authority and need to independent decision Justice in the academic activities Justice in implementation of educational policies</p> <p><b>2- Financial motives</b></p> <p>The appropriateness of reward Job security</p> <p><b>3- Incentive system (tangible and intangible support) for academic activities</b></p> <p>- Tangible incentive system: Well-conditioned work offices, well-equipped labs, and modern appliances Financial assistance for participation in conferences and seminars</p> <p>- Intangible incentive system: A well-disciplined structure at the workplace A high-dynamic atmosphere for progress A supportive context for innovation and creative educational activities</p> <p><b>• Community-Level (invisible motivators)</b></p> <p><b>1- Perceived Need for a complementary atmosphere</b></p> <p>Communal cooperation in workplace Communal co-respect in workplace Communal co-opetition in workplace</p> <p><b>2- Perceived Need for a collaborative atmosphere</b></p> <p>Communal collaboration with motivated and talented students Communal collaboration with other faculties</p>

**Perceived need for authority and justice in scientific activities**

The participants emphasized the role of having professional authority and considered it as one of the crucial enterprise-level factors in gaining power. The faculty staffs also considered power as having authority and making independent decision in their own territory of duty. According to one of the faculty members:

"If you have authority, you gain power ... everything is under control, but we feel having power is insufficient and other factors are also effecting academic performance" (A 50-year male, associate professor in the paramedical faculty with 10 years of work experience).

Participants' believed that justice in academic activities and implementation of educational regulations by administration system have impacted their motivation at both school and hospitals. One of the participants believed:

"If you know that you are working at a workplace in which they evaluate faculties' performance completely fair and with no bias and discrimination, and completely based on their qualification and in accordance with the policies of performance

evaluation, you will have a better feeling and this gives you power and motivation to work with no any concern. (A 39-year female assistant professor at the faculty of medicine with 9 years of work experience).

**Financial motive**

Financial motive is perceived as a motivator controlled by the enterprise they work in. One of the participants believed that:

"Many individuals may work for money, but they may also look for meaning in their lives... however, in our profession, financial support by our school is very important, particularly among non-clinician faculty member"(A 38-year female assistant professor at the faculty of medicine with 7 years of work experience).

The participants believed that regardless of financial rewards, the feeling of job security in the academic world, like many other professions, have a great role in motivating faculties. One of the faculties expressed his experience:

"When I first started working at the school, three other faculties were working at our department. I was lecturer and have MS at that time. They told that the condition for continuing our contract is having financial support from the ministry of science and having PhD. These conditions, though scary, increased my efforts; however, I was not sure if I could get into a PhD program. This feeling of job insecurity was too unpleasant"(A 38-year female assistant professor at the faculty of medicine with 7 years of work experience).

**Incentive system (tangible and intangible support) for academic activities**

Participants understood an incentive system as another motivator in their work. They mentioned two classes of incentive motivators, including tangible and intangible motivators:

**Tangible motivators:** Working in a well-conditioned work office, well-equipped labs, and modern appliances is described a series of motivators that should be provided by the enterprise they are working for. One participant believed that:

"I think workplace significantly affects how you teach, think and even live with motivation... actually about two-third of our time from 8:00 PM to 6:00PM is spent for my academic job; therefore, schools should provide an equipped office in the workplace as it affects our motivation directly or indirectly" (A 48-year female associate professor at the faculty of medicine with 12 years of work experiences).

One of the participants had the same opinion:

"I believe that our labs and offices are like our home. They (schools) should provide necessary accommodations so we have the chance to do our scientific work with no concern. The work atmosphere is really important and motivational (A 44-year male associate professor at the faculty of medicine with 12 years of work experiences).

They also believed that financial assistance for participation in conferences and seminars will motivate faculties to promote themselves by having active collaboration at national or international level. One participant emphasized that:

"With no doubt, working in an atmosphere financially supporting your scientific work will give you a sense of empowerment and power".

**Intangible incentive system:** Participants believed that working at an enterprise that its structure is highly organized and well-disciplined will reduce their concerns and increase motivation for better performance.

"A chaotic administrative routine with no organization disturbs me as I cannot focus calmly on my work and I have this constant concern that my work is not valuable... I lose my faith in the system and lose my motivation accordingly (A 49-year female associate professor at the faculty of nursing with 10 years of work experiences).

Faculties also argued that a dynamic work condition in which the enterprise can develop energetic atmosphere for scientific action will highly motivate them.

"I never can work at a dull school in which the department head does not care about a lively atmosphere".

Being part of the national innovative ecosystem of the country and having opportunities for creativity at national scale is also perceived as an intrinsic reward motivator.

"I won't be motivated enough if I feel that my school does not let me to participate in the country's national path to innovation; I want to feel part of this national effort; and I want to be creative; otherwise I lose my excitement to work" (A 35-year female assistant professor, and faculty of medicine with 5 years of work experience).

#### **Community-level motivators**

This class of motivators are not provided by an enterprise in where faculties work. This class of motivators are not visible as well and goes beyond the self-interests of faculties. Instead, participants believed that members of the school as a community should motivate and engage each other for the benefit of that community. These motivators unlike enterprise level, are invisible, locally organized, informal and spontaneous.

#### **Perceived Need for a complementary atmosphere**

Faculties perceived job motivators beyond their individual scope. To them, through co-respect, cooperation and cooperation, they can achieve mutual accomplishments and progress with other members of the school. This shows that motivators are at the community level, which will increase the feeling of belonging, and attachment to work.

"Sometimes, I want my department achieves an accomplishment. If my colleagues win a prize, I can be proud of them too... we are a unit... We not only

compete with each other, but also help one another to promote the scale of our department ...Backstabbing by colleagues is a huge barrier for progress. We should respect each other and honor each other's work" (A 40-year male associate professor, and faculty of nursing with 10 years of work experience).

#### **Perceived need for a collaborative atmosphere**

Faculties considered students as valuable members of their scientific community as well. They believed that not only they should have collaborative interactions with other faculties but also with their talented students.

"I get excited when I see some of my students come to my office and ask for collaborative opportunities in my research projects. I believe that these motivated students will increase my motivation to work more too". (A 30-year female assistant professor, and faculty of medicine with 2 years of work experience).

"In my school, I prefer interdisciplinary interaction with other faculties so I can feel more belonged to the university. I prefer non-hierarchical communication with other faculties. I rather have informal interaction. This will increase my efficiency at work and the sense of belonging."

## **Discussion**

This study confirms two major class of motivators impacting medical faculties' performance in academia. We classified them into enterprise-level motivators, and community-level motivators. While enterprise motivators are visible constructs dealing with self-interest of faculties, community-level motivators are invisible and strengthen mutual and communal interests of faculties.

While some of the previous studies have addressed motivation among faculties as a whole concept [28], our study broke the concept of motivation into two major categories. According to our participant's perspective, enterprise-level motivators are classified into three sub-categories of perceived need for authority and justice in scientific activities, financial motives and incentive system composed of tangible and intangible support for academic activities. At the community-level, motivators are perceived as a need for a complementary atmosphere and a need for a collaborative atmosphere.

This study showed that not only enterprise-level factors have impacts on faculties' motivation, but also community-level factors. To faculties, authority for independent decision, justice in the academic activities, and justice in application of educational policies are critically important in motivating them. As Birnbaum defines, authority is the right of a person in an organization to demand action of others and expect those demands to be met [29]. Of all four kinds of authority systems (Clark, 1991), this research shows that faculty members demand

academic authority more than enterprises-based, or system-based or charismatics-based authorities [30]. The faculties also perceived that dominance of a discriminatory system will lower their eagerness for scientific activities. However, unlike previous studies [31, 32], the respondents did not mention gender or racial discrimination in their work. Their perception addressed academic discrimination [33], as academic activities should be evaluated with no bias and completely based on the merits of faculties.

Financial motives are also perceived as another major motivator of work. Financial motives are composed of appropriateness of reward and job security. They believe that the more financial motives they have, the more authority and power they feel in their workplace [34]. Our participants' perspective is inveterated by several studies which showed a significant relationship between job security and job satisfaction. In line with similar findings [35, 36] also confirmed that security and insecurity in job perceived as two aspects of satisfaction. Moreover, study by Stankovska *et al.* confirm that academicians are more satisfied with their salary, co-workers, promotion, operating procedures and supervision, but dissatisfied with fringe benefits, contingent rewards, nature of work and communication [2].

Based on our interviews, an incentive system is conceptualized in tangible and intangible motivators. This incentive system is comprised of both tangible and intangible motivators for motivating faculties. Intangible resources spawn from a well-disciplined structure, a high-spirited atmosphere for progress and supportive context for innovation and creative educational activities. Tangible motivators include working at well-conditioned offices, well-equipped labs, and modern appliances and enough financial assistants for participation in conferences and seminars. Our findings are confirmed by other similar studies. For instance, Salin argue that factors such as healthy working conditions, relationships with colleagues, support in research and teaching, appropriate salary, promotion, and opportunities develop a healthy atmosphere for faculties [37]. Irby *et al.* in their study [38] substantiate our findings that educational leaders will need to be persistent in advocating for changes in policies and procedures that develop and reward teaching excellence and educational scholarship.

Community-level motivators are conceptualized as perceived need for complementary atmosphere and need for collaborative atmosphere. The need for a complementary atmosphere is composed of a communal co-operation in workplace, communal co-respect in workplace and communal co-competition in workplace. Faculties believe that community spirit have impact on their work motivation. They understood communal factors of co-operation, co-

respect and co-competition as their job motivators. While the previous studies, link flexibility to the establishment of a relationship with senior colleagues [39], our study confirms that a cooperative behavior has a great impact on developing relationship with other faculties and students.

Perceived need for a collaborative atmosphere is also consisted of communal collaboration with motivated and talented students and communal collaboration with other faculties. They believe that a collaborative atmosphere with both faculties and students will increase their eagerness to work in academia.

This research is a scholarly attempt to investigate concerns and factors affecting motivational work behavior of medical academic faculties. While previous studies have limited academic motivation to students and define it as the "degree to which students invest attention and effort to academic pursuit [40-44], we shift the attention toward faculties and their motivation at the academic life.

The other innovative part of this study is that we focused on the context-based visible and invisible motivators. Moreover, most of the previous studies are quantitative and based on questionnaire. In this study, we adopted a qualitative approach with open-ended interviews in order to delve deeply into contextual factors of motivation. The other major difference of this study is that unlike the previous studies highlighting the role of motivation of specialists in non-educational contexts, we directed attention toward motivation in educational contexts. We identified several study limitations including time restrictions of faculties as they had to work as a clinician and an educator at the same time, and job security concerns even they were assured of being anonymous in the research. We recommend that academic motivators can be also studied based on the perception of another pillars of a medical educational system, especially officials and policy makers in order to take into account perceptions of various stakeholders inside a medical educational system.

## Conclusion

Faculties' perception of job motivation goes beyond visible, self-interest, and enterprise level motivators. They also perceive community-level factors of working at complementary and collaborative atmosphere as major motivators.

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