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# Trichotomy of motivating factors in the workplace: Concept outline

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**Key words:** motivation for work, motivational factors, demotivation, motivational system

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**Summary:** The paper presents the key substantial and methodological aspects of motivation for work, with special attention paid to the analysis of classification of motivating factors. The selected, more important of them, have been described. A new approach to them has been presented in the form of the concept of trichotomy of motivating factors at work (i.e. in the environment, in the situation of work), which constitutes the evolution of the two-factor theory by Frederick Herzberg. This concept lists three groups of factors: “motivators” give satisfaction when present, “factors of hygiene” cause dissatisfaction when not present, and “demotivators” cause dissatisfaction when present. Their vectors of effect on satisfaction with work differ radically, although they are present at the same time in the work environment. That is why this concept constitutes the methodological directive which suggests expansion of the field of analysis of the conducted research by the factors which reduce motivation in the workplace.

## 1. Introduction

Survival and growth of the organisation in a dynamic environment and under conditions of ever increasing competition require initiative and cooperation of all the employees of the organisation.<sup>1</sup> That is why motivation for work of the participants is so important in the production process. Many organisations face the necessity of improving motivation rules in terms of strengthening the motivational effect of salary and other motivation factors, with the simultaneous adjusting of these rules to the financial situation of the company. Improving the motivation system is a difficult

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<sup>1</sup>The control mechanism is changed, as well. Standard procedures based mostly on financial indicators and on authoritarian management do not ensure these days full assessment of the activities of the company (1, p. 17).

process, as it requires comprehensive and in-depth analysis of the current solutions and assessment of effectiveness of their functioning so as to propose a new, more effective system to support execution of the strategic objectives of the company and to facilitate achieving the level of high competitiveness with rationalisation of labour costs, “attracting” the best specialists to the company, developing the appropriate attitudes of the executive personnel and employees about the objectives set and the tasks assigned.

Motivating employees to work constitutes the basic component of the management process, and the manager should have knowledge in this respect. Motivation is the power under the effect of which the individual initiates work, and performs it in the hope of achieving the intended result. The motifs of undertaking specific activities differ, depending on the needs of the person, the situation in the workplace, the conditions of the cultural environment from which he/ she comes, as well as the possibilities of their execution. Motivation means willingness, intention, desire of something. Motivation is thus a psychological process present in each and every employee in the work process, and is the basic element of his/ her work potential, and the obtained results are a significant factor of his/ her competencies. Motivating means stimulating and having the organism continuously ready for action.

With the research of our forerunners taken into account, certain premises may be assumed related to human behaviour: it is caused with specific factors (and does not arise all by itself), it is always related to some objective, and it may be subject to some external action.

These components have been used in designing many models of human behaviour. The main assumption of the model is the thesis that human being has many needs, desires and expectations of varied intensity. Effectiveness of motivation means in turn the result of the accurate selection of principles, tools and factors of motivation (2, p. 26). In other words, the process of motivation consists in connecting requirements and expectations of the organisation towards the employees with the needs, values and expectations of these employees, and satisfaction of the employee—achieved as a result of meeting his/ her needs by the work environment—stimulates him/ her to increase performance of work.

This relatively broad subject matter and scope of research on motivation is limited in the paper to the analysis of classification of motivating factors in the workplace and the characteristics of some of them. A new approach to them has been presented in the form of the concept of trychotomy of motivating factors at work, which constitutes the evolution of the two-factor theory by Frederick Herzberg. Special attention has been paid to the factors which have been called demotivators. These are less known to the general group of readers, and are often omitted in research and discussions. The objective of the paper is thus presentation of the new approach to the typology of motivating factors at work (i.e. in the environment, in the situation of work), and stating directions and methods of their examination, as well as practical use of the results of this analysis.

## 2. Characteristics of the selected classifications of factors of motivation for work

In the diagnosis of the factors of motivation for work, at least some definitions of motivation are worth quoting, often repeated in the already voluminous and broad literature, as they are important from the point of view of the planned research. Michael Armstrong states that motivation deals with factors which affect people to behave in a specific way (3, p. 210). A definition similar to some extent is given by Falko Rheinberg, writing that it is “activating direction of the current act of life on a positively assessed target situation” (4, p. 18). This concise definition requires additional explanations. The term “activating direction” or “positively assessed target situation” has to be considered in many meanings. For example, motivation may be regarded as various conditions and behaviour, such as wanting, attempting, desiring, pursuing something; it may also mean avoiding, hesitating, aversion, fear of unwanted events, experiences. Thus, according to the author, avoiding motivation differs in many respects from achievement motivation. From among other definitions of this phenomenon which emphasise significance of motivating factors, the one by Ferdynand Michoń is worth quoting. According to him, motivation is a set of forces and factors which stimulate to and keep a person in the behaviours aimed at achieving specific objectives. The said forces are needs, drives, instincts, aspirations, as well as tensions, called the mechanism of the human organism (5, p. 18). This definition presents attributes or features of motivation.

Depending on economic and social conditions or individual differences (resulting from personality and experience), people are governed in their personal activities by varied motivations, i.e. factors of motivation, stimuli.<sup>2</sup>

The literature gives many classifications of the types of motivation, which are supported by psychological and other theories. One of them is differentiating motivation into internal (intrinsic) and external (extrinsic). The term of internal motivation, also called autotelic or endogenous is used to such forms of activities which are carried out for the same of the activity alone. The term of external motivation (exogenous, instrumental) refers to the activities focused on a stimulus included in the objectives or consequences (6, p. 331 et seqq.).

The subject matter of the discussion is limited mostly to external factors, instrumental, in particular the ones which form the motivational system of the employees of the organisation. The motivational system, which is a set of motivation factors selected by the company, is the tool used by the managers to increase effectiveness of work.

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<sup>2</sup> Motivations, that is factors of motivation, stimuli of the need, tasks, may be understood as any change in the human environment (e.g. change in the situation of an employee), which causes or changes a motif for action.

### 3. Tri-factor concept of motivating factors

The theory of F. Herzberg highly contributed to the development of knowledge about motivation for work, especially in the research of motivating factors. He stipulated a thesis that satisfaction and dissatisfaction are caused by basically different factors present in the work environment.<sup>3</sup> He called the factors which give satisfaction when present “motivators”, and the ones which cause dissatisfaction with work when absent—“factors of hygiene” (higienes). The following have been accepted as motivators: achievements, recognition, promotion, the contents of work, the possibility of personal development, responsibility. The factors of hygiene include: the policy of the company and management, technical supervision, interpersonal relationships, remuneration, safety of work, working conditions, welfare benefits, position occupied.

Pursuant to this theory, increasing satisfaction with work is possible even when dissatisfaction is not reduced, and the case is true in the opposite situation. Numerous charges are put against the Herzberg’s theory,<sup>4</sup> yet researchers who deal with these issues admit that this theory has contributed to enhancing research methods in motivation for work (there are two independent continuums: satisfaction and dissatisfaction with work), moreover, this theory has provided additional arguments related to connecting satisfaction with work with effectiveness of the employee. The latest research shows that there are other factors of motivation for work (other than motivators and factors of hygiene), namely demotivators, whose vector of action basically differs from that in the other factors. So far, research documents on demotivation are scarce. Waldemar Stelmach attempted to systematise this issue with the definition of demotivation as the total sum of factors which affect aversion or increase in aversion to the performed work (7, p. 90).

The authors indicate various and numerous factors which demotivate people for work.<sup>5</sup> Stelmach, on the basis of the conducted empirical research, proposed such

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<sup>3</sup> Earlier research used the concept of satisfaction with work, included in the single-dimension space model. Satisfaction and dissatisfaction in the workplace were regarded as opposite values of the same continuum, i.e. it was assumed that the given factor has positive value for the employee, and its lack has negative value, and the other way round.

<sup>4</sup> The two sets of motivating factors introduced by Herzberg are differently regarded by different categories of employees. Some factors of hygiene may be regarded as motivators, and an opposite view may also appear.

<sup>5</sup> For example, a list of harmful behaviours may be given, as stated by Peter Honey, which may be also viewed as a list of demotivating factors. These are examples of behaviours resulting from interpersonal communication, such as picking out errors in the statements of the speaker, refusing to understand the feelings or views of the speaker, expressing objection before explanation or keeping defensive attitude or inconsistency in verbal and non-verbal behaviours (8, p. 245); Stanisław Smoleński presents somewhat ironically the premises often found in practice, the “premises” of demotivation, such as, for example, breaking promises, dilettantism of the superiors, pursuing career at the expense of colleagues or, in short, amoral behaviour of the superiors or colleagues (9, p. 214). The authors: Anna Kozińska, Joanna Szybisz, defined the condition of demotivation and provided its five dimensions. They have described the demotivation condition as “usually passive behaviour, frozen still, heaviness and aversion.

demotivation causes as: unclear regulations, exerting pressure on employees for performing work not fully consistent with regulations and professional ethics, work beyond capacity, sham, unequal distribution of duties, lack of additional training, failure to recognise employees with long-term history of employment and practical experience, pressure and fear of losing employment. These relationships were grouped into four areas according to the recurring problems (7, p. 96):

1. Emotional situations: lack of the possibility of self-actualisation, lack of information on own future in the given company, breaking the promises made during the interview, unjust penalties or prizes, promotion. The effect of personal culture of the management on demotivation, stress as a result of improper, amoral behaviour of the superiors towards the subordinates.
2. Situations of work organisation: improper management, lack of the possibility of co-deciding, disapproving work environment, bad effects of work, not observing the regulations of the Labour Code, unfriendly employee relationships and contacts with clients, ignorance of responsibility, material deficiencies.
3. Economic situations resulting from defective method of remuneration, “wrong efficiency” of assigning equivalent for effort, for work time, lack of “justice” in defining salaries, boni and additional awards for employees.
4. External situations: wrong policy of the management and other main authorities of the organisation, long-term objectives of the organisation not taking into account the interests of the employees, unfavourable national regulations and administrative orders of the management determining solving of problems, activities of local governments, that is (according to the Author) objective factors, independent on the responders.

As one can see, the said motivational factors, i.e. demotivators, give human activities a specific direction, strongly affect meeting visceral needs, the need of safety, the needs of recognition (respect). In the known and recognised Abraham Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, most of them are of the lower range: the needs which, when not met, dominate other needs, determine the behaviour of the individual (employee). Due to their significance, first attention should be paid to these factors. They result mostly from alienation of work, errors in the organisation and management system, as well as weaknesses of the human nature.

However, referring to the quoted classification of demotivation causes, one has to emphasise that it is not quite precise, as it consists of four too generally aggregated measures, including both demotivation factors and, first of all, factors of hygiene, e.g. conditions of work or interpersonal relationships. Other authors present these factors

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It turns out that employers create events for the employed which weaken their natural level of energy and result in behaviours with demotivation signs (10, p. 8 et seqq.). John Adair states the following premises and manifestations of demotivation: disseminating information about lack of perspectives in the development of the company, spreading the atmosphere of disasters, near bankruptcy, suggesting lack of reasons for the work provided, etc. (11, p. 158 et seqq.).

in a similar way, not excluding F. Herzberg. Thus, both identification and clear, dis-juncting classification of motivating factors in the work environment are lacking.

The summary of the presented theoretical comments gave reasons to the statement that almost all the said factors are important and should not be omitted in research on motivation in the workplace. The effect of the set of motivating factors on satisfaction with work are presented in Table 1. The directions (vectors) of interactions of the said factors are basically divergent, although they may be present at the same time in the given work environment.

Table 1

The effect of motivating factors on satisfaction with work

Factors	When present, cause:	When absent, cause:
Motivators	Satisfaction	Lack of satisfaction
Factors of hygiene	Lack of satisfaction	Dissatisfaction
Demotivators	Dissatisfaction	Lack of dissatisfaction

Source: Author's own study.

For the purposes of preparation of the classification of motivating factors in the workplace, the method of linear ordering of objects in multidimensional space of features called comparative analysis has been used.<sup>6</sup> With this method, the set of the adopted variables should be divided into: stimulants (the variables whose increasing value proves increase in the level of the researched phenomenon), nominants (the variables for which the values proving high value of the researched phenomenon are included within a certain range) and destimulants (the variables whose decreasing value proves increase in the level of the researched phenomenon) (13, p. 17). Assuming that factors of motivation in the workplace will be in this case the diagnostic variable, factors of motivation were considered to be the stimulant (referred to as motivators). The nominant will be the factors of hygiene, and the denominator will be the obstacles present in the work process, that is factors of demotivation in the workplace. In the light of the quoted comments, improving, rationalisation of the system of motivation, should include not only identification of the factors, but first of all the activities aimed at elimination of demotivators (denominants), optimisation of the factors of hygiene (nominants) and maximisation of motivators (stimulants), in line with the financial possibilities and legal and organisational conditions, that is the strategy of the company.

Based on the research described in literature, the Mason Haire's concept may be also quoted which emphasises significance of not only factors motivating for work,

<sup>6</sup>The original method of linear ordering of objects in a multidimensional space of features, called the multidimensional comparative analysis, was proposed by Professor Zdzisław Hellwig, head of the Chair of Statistics in Wyższa Szkoła Ekonomiczna in Wrocław. This method allows defining the ranking of objects described in a multidimensional space of features, with some criteria of order taken into consideration. Professor Hellwig defined the necessary terms, such as stimulants and destimulants (12).

but also significance of demotivating factors. This concept is based on the assumption that the effectiveness curve of work of the team of employees features the trend to achieve the condition of relative balance. The company management may achieve higher effectiveness of work by reinforcement of forces under the curve of work effectiveness, that is forces of negative nature, inciting negative personnel relationships along with it. With the appropriate actions reducing the effect of the hindering forces, a similar result may be achieved, i.e. higher effectiveness of work. The difference between these two solutions consists in the fact that the latter actions may bring about the same result with lower tension in the personnel (5, pp. 110–115). The conclusion comes from the M. Haire's concept that the role of both stimulating and hindering factors is equally important in the analytical research aimed at determining factors of effectiveness of work. That is why this concept constitutes the methodological directive which suggests expansion of the field of analysis of the conducted research by the factors which hinder effectiveness of work.

The overview of factors which affect satisfaction with work, constituting at the same time the subject matter of numerous research on motivation for work in employees, allowed isolation of these which repeated most often. A list of almost 50 factors was made, which, as it seems, are of quite common nature, almost universal. The research employed the expert method. Line managers of organisational units and specialists in personnel management played the role of experts. Table 2 presents selected, more important of them.

Qualification of factors of motivation for work in the organisation to these categories is not easy. Analysing the research of earlier authors on this issue, many unsolved issues may be found which concern the proper distribution of factors such as the division into factors of hygiene and motivators. The same factors are differently qualified in different research documents, with different scopes and directions of effect assigned. Factors which demotivate in the workplace, as an issue relatively new in the literature and causing many controversies, have not been sufficiently identified and categorised in terms of their strength and vector of interaction. Designing the appropriate and at the same time practical solutions in the scope of diagnosis of factors of motivation for work turns out to be a task of even more complexity and difficulty.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> The known and commonly used methods of studying factors of motivation for work limit their object of analysis to the factors which are named motivators. This applies, in particular, to such methods as the method of Lawler and Porter, which is commonly used as a method diagnosing effectiveness of a motivation system in a company (14). The method of Blum and Russ is used for determining the hierarchy of values of the selected motifs motivating for work, which are followed by the employee when undertaking and executing work (15, p. 85). The method of J. Richard Hackman and G. Oldham, with the use of the authors' questionnaire with five criteria which specify the motivational contents of a task assigned to an employee for execution, in terms of its adjusting to the expectations of the employee (16, pp. 159–170). In the scope of mobbing, the methods of its measuring are developed to determine its effect as one of the factors which may cause demotivation. One of such methods is the NAQ (Negative Acts Questionnaire) dedicated for identifying and assessment of the degree of exposure of employees to mobbing in specific work environments, as well as for comparing indicators obtained in different countries, professional groups or organisations (17, p. 16 et seqq.). For the purposes of learning factors



If one would try to translate this concept into the language of psychology, it appears as a de-individualised and largely unconscious regulation. The observation that the motivation process is not controlled cognitively is already a form of cognitive control. Thus one should believe that becoming aware of one's own situation of interaction in the demotivation factors is just the beginning of the process of elimination of this phenomenon. This comment may be referred to the other factors of satisfaction with work (motivation), i.e. factors of hygiene and factors positively motivating the employees.

Table 2

Examples of factors affecting satisfaction with work

Motivating factors	Factors of hygiene	Demotivating factors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Financial awards</li> <li>– Possibility of promotion</li> <li>– Possibility of personal development</li> <li>– Flexible working hours</li> <li>– A café (additional services, prizes)</li> <li>– Appraisal and expression of recognition</li> <li>– Training paid by the employer</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Salary</li> <li>– Work time</li> <li>– Load with work</li> <li>– Organisational commitment</li> <li>– Interpersonal relationships, good atmosphere in the workplace</li> <li>– Safety of work</li> <li>– Contents of work</li> <li>– Policy of the company</li> <li>– Responsibility</li> <li>– Social and welfare activities</li> <li>– Supervision of the employer</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Mobbing on part of superiors, colleagues</li> <li>– Stress in the workplace caused with amoral behaviour of superiors, colleagues</li> <li>– Work exceeding psychological and physical capacity of the employee, his/ her qualifications</li> <li>– Signing contracts for short periods of time</li> <li>– Negative behaviour necessary to achieve the objectives of the organisation</li> <li>– Inability to change the actual condition, making improvements (feeling powerless)</li> </ul>

Source: Author's own study.

## 4. Conclusions

To complete the presentation of the concept of trichotomy of motivating factors in the workplace, it is important to state that instead of identification and measuring the selected motivating factors, important from the point of view of the theory, in practice research and reconstruction should cover the whole motivational process as much as it is possible. Moreover, or first of all, if the concepts in the area of motivation for work are to be not only defined with scientific precision, but also used in practice, a diagnostic system should be ready at hand to capture the significant com-

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motivating employees for work and specifying their priorities, i.e. defining importance of each motivating factor by assigning it a specific weight in numbers, the AHP method (Analytic Hierarchy Process) may also be used (18).



ponents (factors) of the motivational process on the one hand, and which should be clear and understandable, on the other hand.

With the above findings taken into account, one may assume a thesis that development of a method of diagnosing a system of motivating employees for work in a company is necessary and possible, in which the subject matter and scope of the research would include motivators, factors of hygiene and factors of demotivation. The practical results of this research should constitute a premise for improving the motivational system and the basis for the proper business pragmatics. The identified motivators may be useful in building a system of motivation within the company's collective employment rules system; the factors of hygiene may be used in developing the work regulations, and demotivators may constitute the basis for preparation of the code of ethics of the organisation. As one can see, the results of the research designed in this way may prove to be useful in developing a theory of motivation and, what is more significant, may be used in the practical operation of companies and institutions for improving their systems of motivation, or even systems of work.

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## Trychotomia czynników motywacji w pracy – zarys koncepcji

**Streszczenie:** W artykule przedstawiono węzłowe kwestie merytoryczne i metodyczne motywacji do pracy, ze szczególnym zwróceniem uwagi na analizę klasyfikacji czynników motywacji. Scharakteryzowano wybrane, ważniejsze z nich. Zaprezentowano nowe ich ujęcie w postaci koncepcji trychotomii czynników motywacji w pracy (tj. w środowisku, w sytuacji pracy), która stanowi rozwinięcie dwuczynnikowej teorii Fredericka Herzberga. W tej koncepcji wyróżniono trzy grupy czynników: „motywatory”, które gdy występują, powodują zadowolenie; „czynniki higieny” – gdy nie występują, wywołują niezadowolenie; oraz „demotywatory” – gdy pojawiają się, powodują niezadowolenie. Ich wektory oddziaływania na zadowolenie z pracy różnią się diametralnie, chociaż występują one w środowisku pracy równocześnie. Dlatego też koncepcja ta stanowi dyrektywę metodologiczną sugerującą rozszerzenie pola analizy prowadzonych badań na czynniki zmniejszające motywację w pracy.

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**Słowa kluczowe:** motywacja do pracy, czynniki motywacyjne, demotywacja, system motywacyjny

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