LUND UNIVERSITY
School of Economics and Management

Department of Business administration

FEKH49

Degree project in Organization, Bachelor level

Spring 2015

Job Motivation in high-tech knowledge work

The Unintented detrimental role of management

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ABSTRACT

Title: Job motivation in high-tech knowledge work- the unintended detrimental role of management

Seminar Date: 4th June 2015

Course: FEKH49

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Key Words: Knowledge Worker, Intrinsic Motivation, Extrinsic Motivation, Priority Task, Recognition.

Purpose: The purpose of this research is to critically examine the role of intrinsic motivation in knowledge work. It intends to investigate the managerial attempt to motivate knowledge workers and examines the role of the management from the knowledge workers' perspective.

Methodology: This research has taken the interpretive viewpoint. It is a qualitative study with an abductive approach. Eight semi-structured interviews have been conducted and analyzed.

Theoretical Perspectives: The theoretical framework is focused mainly on the intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in the context of knowledge work. The knowledge worker's work ambiguity is presented. And the equity theory of motivation is and analyzed as to how it affects motivation in knowledge work.

Empirical foundation: The empirical foundation of this research consists of eight semi-structured interviews conducted in a knowledge intensive firm, Motiv AB.

Conclusion: This research shows that even though intrinsic motivation is important, the role of extrinsic motivation is also found to be vital in knowledge workers. In this context, the role of the management can also be detrimental at times (though unintentional) in affecting the knowledge worker motivation.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Firstly, I would like to thank my supervisor Sverre Spoelstra for providing valuable assistance and guidance during the thesis work.

I would like to thank all the respondents for their participation. I am thankful for your time and your willingness to share your experiences with me.

1st June 2015

Chaitra Harish Bhat

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1 INTRODUCTION

"The best people working for organizations are like volunteers. Since they could probably find good jobs in any number of groups, they choose to work somewhere for reasons less tangible than salary or position" - Max De Pree, (1989, p. 28)

This was the quote written by a former CEO and popular writer on leadership, Max DePree about the concept of ideal employee. It suggests that ideal employees are like intrinsically motivated, which is to say they don't do their work principally for material rewards.

1.1 Background

Motivation has been one of the most debated issues in the field of Human Resource Management. According to Longenecker (2011) "Motivation is a means to get people buy in and take ownership of the organizations' needs as well as their own." Motivation is regarded as one of the crucial part of manager's work, since it is believed to impact employee performance and 'thus to the extent to which organizations are able to achieve their objectives and justify their existence' (Muo, 2013, p.119). It is often said that a motivated employee becomes a productive employee who leads to the increase in profitability (Elena, 2012). Hence motivated employees are seen as a key source of competitive advantage (Kumar, 2011). With the increasing competition in the modern business world, it is seen as difficult to compete only on the basis of sources such as capital, technology and natural resources (Kumar, 2011).

As such, the competitive strength of an organization is often attributed to its employee's capability to create knowledge and innovations (Markova and Ford, 2011). Business is becoming more and more knowledge intensive from capital intensive (Alvesson, 2004). Economy has been shifting from capital to people driven one (Florida, 2002). Therefore a 'creative class' has been said to emerge (Florida, 2002), which consists of employees emerged as knowledge workers. The organizations where this creative class works have been labeled as Knowledge Intensive Firms (KIFs), which deliver knowledge based products to the company developed through the intellectual skills of its workforce (Alvesson, 2004).

Knowledge workers are considered to have the ability and expertise to generate new ideas to develop new products and thereby lead their organizations in innovations (Markova and Ford, 2011). Through their intellectual ability, knowledge workers are believed to create immense value for the organization and its stakeholders (Muo, 2013). Motivating knowledge worker is seen as very important because there are researches showing that motivated knowledge workers can be atleast 10 times more effective (Davenport, 2005).

Additionally, knowledge worker motivation is gaining a lot of attention in the research area because of the increasing significance of the KIFs in the present days. Alvesson (2004) quotes that the upsurging interest in the KIFs is mainly due to its rapid growth and importance in the economy. The role of the KIFs and knowledge workers is further becoming increasingly dominating in the economy (Alvesson, 2004).

When it comes to knowledge worker motivation, the emphasis is been given mainly on the intrinsic motivation. This shows itself in many academic and popular management literatures. For instance, Horwitz (2003) and Frick (2010) highlighted the significance of the intrinsic motivation in knowledge workers and undermined the role of extrinsic motivation. Contrary to this, some scholars including Eisenberger and Shanock (2003) argued that extrinsic motivation like financial incentives and rewards are also important.

The contradictory views and ensuing debates made the topic interesting to look further into and that paved the way for this thesis. Therefore in my thesis, I would like to make an inquiry into the knowledge worker motivation and investigate about perceived significance of the intrinsic motivation of knowledge workers.

1.2 Problematization

Despite of having many different models and theories about the motivation, there has not been the single best practice which can be regarded as the commonly accepted model of motivation for all (Frick, 2010). Hence motivating the employees is viewed as a challenge in itself. Motivating the knowledge workers is considered to be more challenging owing to the complex nature and the ambiguity of their work. Further these highly skilled workers with mostly academic backgrounds

know their value within the organization and the expect respect, recognition adding to the complexity of the scenario (Muo, 2013; Alvesson, 2004).

Considering the significance of knowledge worker, it has become most common for the management to incorporate various monetary and non-monetary methods of motivation. In an effort to boost employee motivation, rewards range from merit increase of the salary to even innovative ones such as providing seasons tickets for the employees' favourite sports teams (Markova and Ford, 2011).

However, many scholars and authors of popular management literature do not agree that these efforts by the management are effective. Pink (2011) claims that these rewards diminish motivation and decrease performance. Some of the studies done by the researchers indicated that extrinsic rewards are old fashioned (Pink, 2011; Koln, 2009). But few literatures challenged this point of view. For instance (Risher, 2013) argued that rewards have been contributing to company's success and are needed. Presently, there is an ongoing debate about various rewards and whether the extrinsic rewards are needed in developed economies (Pink, 2011). This shows that the role of extrinsic motivation is being undermined and the sole focus is been put on the intrinsic motivation.

This makes one wonder if intrinsic motivation is all enough? Since intrinsic motivation is considered as a motivation from the inner-self or motivation derived from the self-interest, it can be challenging for the management to motivate the employees intrinsically. Thereby showing that there may be an obligation for the management to motivate the employees extrinsically.

I will argue in my thesis that in addition to the intrinsic motivation, the extrinsic motivation is needed for the knowledge workers. I make this argument on the basis of my empirical findings which exhibited the crucial factors relating to the motivation of the knowledge workers. I will discuss the conflicts in motivation from the viewpoint of knowledge workers. In contrast to the dominant perspective on motivation of knowledge workers, I will argue that a sole emphasis on intrinsic motivation is not enough. There is also a need for managerial attempts to motivate the knowledge workers to perform.

1.3 Purpose

The purpose of this research is to critically examine the role of intrinsic motivation in knowledge work. It intends to investigate the managerial attempt to motivate knowledge workers and examines the role of the management from the knowledge workers' perspective.

1.4 Research Question

How important is intrinsic motivation for knowledge workers and how do knowledge workers perceive managerial attempts to increase their motivation?

1.5 Method

In this study, the knowledge workers who have been engaged in highly technical work were interviewed to collect the empirical data. For this purpose, semi-structured interviews were conducted with eight knowledge workers working in a Knowledge Intensive Firm, which is a leading firm in its core technology.

1.6 Relevance

The relevance of this thesis is twofold. First it seeks to contribute to the academic literature on motivation of knowledge workers. After studying the existing academic literature on the motivation of knowledge workers, I can conclude that there isn't much work written on this topic with the perspective this study has taken. The foreseen crucial role of intrinsic motivation in knowledge worker needs to be investigated. This study examines whether the intrinsic motivation is really enough and considers the role of management in influencing the motivation of knowledge workers. It takes into consideration crucial factors which do not seem to be focused in the existing literature.

Secondly this study sheds light on some critical factors for practical implications in Knowledge Intensive Firms. This study includes some notable factors influencing the motivation of knowledge workers in high-tech knowledge firm and makes an enquiry into the knowledge worker motivation. In particular, this study critically examines the importance of intrinsic motivation in high-tech

knowledge work and managerial attempts to enhance it. These make it the study of interest for the Knowledge intensive firms engaged in highly technical work and want to boost the motivation of their workforce to achieve good performance.

1.7 Disposition

This section provides for the short overview of the disposition of the structure of this thesis. This chapter has presented the problem formulation of this thesis. The contradictory view in the literature on the intrinsic and extrinsic motivation of knowledge workers is discussed which gave rise to research problem. The second chapter will present the methodological considerations of this study. This includes a description of how the study has been conducted, and a reflection on the approaches taken by this study in collecting and analyzing the empirical material. The third chapter will present the theoretical framework for analyzing the empirical data. The knowledge work ambiguity is highlighted and the theoretical aspects pertaining to motivation including equity theory which are mainly relating to the research area are covered. This framework is carefully crafted to help in understanding and interpreting the empirical data better. The forth chapter will present the empirical findings of the study. An interpretive analysis is been made on the employee perception of motivation referring to the theoretical aspects covered. The factors influencing the motivation of knowledge workers and the role of the management are discussed. The employee contentment and discontentment in the priority work is analysed. Further in the fifth chapter, the discussion is presented revisiting the research question and the knowledge contributions interpreted from the empirical data. The role of intrinsic motivation of knowledge workers and the intervening role of the management, is been discussed based on the empirical findings and analysis. Thereafter the sixth chapter will present the concluding results and my contributions from the study. The thesis is concluded fulfilling the purpose of the research. Lastly, the potential for further research is suggested which is followed by the section of references.

2 Methodology

This chapter provides an outline of the methodological considerations for this study. It begins with a discussion of the methodological approach to this study, followed by an overview of the research process. Next, I discuss the Abductive approach. After that, the data collection methods that I have followed are discussed, which is followed by a discussion of how I have analyzed the data. The chapter is concluded with the discussion on credibility and trustworthiness of this study.

2.1 Methodological approach

Qualitative research focuses on the ways individuals perceive and interpret their social world and hence is closely related to interpretivist doctrine (Bryman and Bell, 2011). This research takes an interpretive viewpoint, since I will be analyzing the employees interpretations to understand their perception of motivation. Prasad (2005) claims that interpretive traditions emerge from individual's interpretation which is the beginning of knowledge development about the social world. So in that sense, it matters how an individual perceives and interprets the world because his/her acts are based on those interpretations (Prasad, 2005). Symbolic Interactionism is one of the interpretive traditions. Here the focus is on self and individual sense making. And it is assumed to have influence in the process of assigning meaning to things and events, which in turn influences individual's actions (Prasad, 2005). That means people interact with others and their environment by interpretation of the symbolic meaning of what they perceive as their surrounding to be. My research problem is related to what the employees perceived as motivation in their work surrounding and how they made sense of the objects and events. It takes a Symbolic Interactionism point of view.

Hermeneutics is another interpretive tradition. In this tradition, text is seen in layers, hiding the deeper meanings in them. So Prasad (2005) suggests that researcher has to go inside these layers of texts to see the hidden meanings, since knowing the mere evident meaning is not enough. Therefore in my research, I have made an attempt to interpret the text underneath rather than considering the surface text. For instance, when respondents experienced discontentment for lack of recognition, I have interpreted the text underneath on the basis of my theoretical framework

relating to ambiguity work environment and equity theory. Because in motivation, it is really important to see what employee considers in the inner layers of text as significant rather than which he merely mentions. Since both the meanings may tend to differ in some situations. So this study also takes a hermeneutic view point in that context.

2.2 Research process

Qualitative research provides for seeing the events and the social world through the eyes of the people being studied (Bryman and Bell, 2011). Unlike quantitative research which relies primarily on the linear attributes, measurements and statistics, qualitative research relies mainly on human perceptions and understanding (Stake, 2010). Since this study focuses on the employee perceptions, I have chosen qualitative research for this paper. Also qualitative methods have been applied in order to gain deeper understanding of the topic and in generating new theories (Bryman and Bell, 2011). I felt deeper understanding of my topic was needed to know more about the job motivation including employee's intrinsic motivation and managerial intervention in enhancing it. A deeper study was necessary to study the underlying factors of motivation and its influences. This prompted me to use the qualitative methods. Over the years, qualitative research has yielded a rich body of research using non-statistical methods and have been a combination of metaphors, paradigms, diverse perspectives and procedures (Prasad 2005).

2.3 Abductive approach

It is important to have a proper approach in order to study the research problem. Bryman and Bell (2011) suggest that researchers should be aware of the available options in order to select the best and most efficient approach to investigate the research question. I have chosen abductive approach for my study, which functions as an interplay between existing theory and empirical data (Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2009). In other words, this approach alternates the research process between 'the existing theory and empirical facts whereby both are successively reinterpreted in the light of each other' (Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2009, p.4). In my research, initially I have studied existing literatures on the theroies, models and perceptions of job motivation which became the basis for the ground work of this thesis. Later, the empirical data was gathered and analysed intending to

generate the new theories. The analysis of empirical findings is combined with the study of existing literature as well as discovering of new patterns that bring understanding in the process (Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2009, p.4). During the analysis of my empirical findings, I have referred to the existing theories on motivation and searched for new patterns drawing the abductive approach to this study (Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2009).

2.4 Secondary data collection

The secondary data is collected from external sources which includes books or academic articles. For this research, the secondary data used was mainly collected through Lund University Library, Lund University database Summon and Google scholar. And also through other databases like Emerald Insight and Science Direct. The articles used are mainly academic articles which are peer reviewed, but I have occasionally drawn on examples from popular management literature as well, since they had focused on some relevant aspects of my study area.

2.5 Primary Data Collection

2.5.1 Semi-structured interviews

Interviewing is a prominent method of primary data collection in qualitative research. The qualitative research is often conducted through interviewing since it offers a lot of flexibility to the researchers (Bryman and Bell, 2011). Semi-structured interview method is been taken for this study. During this semi-structured type of interview, the researcher often has a list of questions on specific topics that have to be answered by the interviewee, but at the same time the interviewee has a lot of flexibility in replying. And this flexibility helps in gathering rich and detailed answers (Bryman and Bell, 2011) I strongly felt this type of flexibility was needed for my research as I wanted the respondents to be more open and not limit themselves to answering only the specific questions. This would help me in seeking deeper understanding of my research topic, grasp the underlying messages and gain more insight about employee motivation. I wanted them to give detailed answers, so that I could not only get the information about their job motivation but also their intrinsic motivation which is more about their inner-self. Semi-structured interviews seemed to be the best method since it gives this flexibility and prompts the respondents to give their overall view and understanding of the focus topic. So I have chosen semi-structured interview for this research. While it gave the respondents some degree of freedom, it also gave me some sort of

control on the procedure. Accordingly, respondents had the possibility to elaborate on their perceptions and understanding which has been very beneficial for this research.

2.5.2 Selecting Respondents

In this study, the respondents weren't selected randomly instead they were selected on the basis of their relevance to the study purpose so that they could contribute to achieve that purpose (Bryman and Bell, 2011). Mainly the respondents' professional experience and their job positions in their organizations were taken into account while selecting them. So eight knowledge workers working in a globally operating knowledge intensive firm were selected for this purpose. The details of the interviewees are presented in Appendix 1 below. They work in the same division of the firm spread in 3 teams. All of them have a work experience of at least 10 years. Respondents were anonymized in order to protect their identity and avoid any critique. And this anonymity, I suppose has prompted them to give their sincere opinions about the research problem. The interviewees as well as their organization are referred to with the pseudonym in the succeeding chapters. Simultaneously, the organization is given the pseudonym as Motiv AB. The details of interviewees are given below (Table 1)

Interviewee	Position held	Pseudonym
1.	Scrum Master	Respondent A
2.	Scrum Master	Respondent B
3.	Architect	Respondent C
4.	Senior Developer	Respondent D
5.	Senior Developer	Respondent E
6.	Team Lead	Respondent F
7.	Senior Developer	Respondent G
8.	Manager	Resopndent H

(Table 1)

2.5.3 Interview Process and Procedure

This section will explain the interview process and procedure. In semi-structured interviews, the researcher comes up with a list of questions on certain specific topics to be asked during the

interview which is known as interview guide (Bryman and Bell, 2011). So I had prepared an interview guide with specific topics and some questions within them. I also asked some follow-up questions which were not included in the interview guide. However I made sure all the topics I had specified in the interview guide were covered effectively. In the end of the interview, respondents were free to add any additional information which they felt was relevant to the research yet had not been covered in the questions. This was helpful in gathering deeper thoughts from the respondents (Bryman and Bell, 2011).

All the interviews were conducted in the work place of the respondents. They were conducted in a separate, quiet meeting room. The interviews were audio recorded with the permission of the interviewee. Later these audio records were transcribed. Transcription is the process in which the oral interview is converted into textual form (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009). These transcribed texts were then used to make the analysis.

2.6 Data Analysis

After doing the transcriptions, I verified and checked them two times to avoid the possibility of any incorrect texts or misunderstanding of a concept. This contributed to the accuracy of the data used in analysis.

Grounded theory approach to the qualitative data analysis is been applied. This approach is concerned with developing theory out of the data collected (Bryman and Bell, 2011). Hence the analysis part started with the coding. Coding is a central process in grounded theory where the data is divided into component parts (Bryman and Bell, 2011). The selective coding practice is been adopted for this study. I took the high and low priority tasks as the selective codes.'It is the procedure of selecting core category, systematically relating it to other categories, validating those relationships, and filling categories that need further refinement and development (Bryman and Bell, 2011, p.586). These categories in the coding represent the real-world phenomena. I arrived at the categories which provided the basis for the analysis. Later these categories were systematically related to form a theoretical framework that explains relevant social phenomena (Bryman and Bell, 2011, p.587).

2.7 Credibility and Trustworthiness

While conducting research high credibility is important in order to create trustworthiness of the research process and results. According to Alvesson & Sköldberg (2009) one way of creating credibility in qualitative research is by criticizing the sources of research through applying the criterions of authenticity, bias, distance and dependence.

Authenticity refers to being conscious of the source used in research as to whether it is a trustworthy one. In my attempt to make the findings more trustworthy, I have gathered data only through the face to face interviews. Face to face interviews are considered as more authentic and reliable compared to telephonic and computer aided interviews (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009). By this way, I could interact more effectively by putting the follow-up questions and getting the individual perceptions more accurately. I also assured the respondents that they would be anonymized so as to prompt them to talk more genuinely about the research problem.

Bias is mainly concerned with the purpose of the speaking individual. Here there was also a risk that participants may try to present themselves in more advantageous position. To reduce this risk, I have critically made the follow-up questions and have also taken into account the underlying explanations and meanings.

Distance is concerned with the space and time of the happenings quoted by the respondents. Here I have to acknowledge that at some point few respondents referred to the events that happened few years ago. However, since they had to refer that only a few times while comparing to their present work situation this criticism does not count to be of much relevance.

Dependence refers to the number of people the original information has been passed through. As I myself have collected the empirical data through in-depth, semi-structured, face to face interviews with the respondents, this criticism does not apply to this study.

3 Theory

This chapter presents the theoretical aspects which are relevant to the purpose of the study. It starts with the section on knowledge worker's work and work environment followed by identity in such settings. Thereafter the intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation are described, distinguished and discussed. Further the importance of intrinsic motivation in knowledge workers is stated followed by role of extrinsic motivation. Lastly the equity theory of motivation has been discussed to analyse how the employees tend to compare the returns.

3.1 Knowledge worker's work and work environment

To start with, the concept of knowledge worker and the knowledge work ambiguity needs to be described in order to understand better the context of work motivation.

The knowledge workers are defined by Davenport (2013), as the one who drives the innovation and growth in an organization by implementing the strategies and developing new products and services, designing the programs to be marketed. They are typically paid above average salaries and have high status making them termed as 'gold collar' workers (Alvesson, 2004, p.18). The knowledge workers' work is considered to be ambiguous, complex, creative and technical environment is said to be outlined by unknowness and uncertainties (Alvesson, 2004; Badawy, 2007). To describe this nature of the knowledge-intensive work, Alvesson (2004) lists several characteristics common among KIFs (p.38):

- the centrality of intellectual and symbolic skills in work, motivating the term "knowledge work";
- that self-organization and dispersed authority are typically salient;
- a tendency to downplay bureaucracy in favor of ad hoc organizational forms;
- a high level of uncertainty and problem-awareness in team-work calling for extensive communication for coordination and problem-solving;
- that in professional service work client services need to be client-centered and situationally fine-tuned;
- complex problems and solutions involving considerable elements of intangibility calling for subjective and uncertain quality assessment;

- that the expert position (or claim to or belief in such a position) creates a particular power asymmetry between professional firm and client (often favoring the professional over the client).

These characteristics give the understanding of the context of work motivation in which this study has been conducted. These characteristics emphasize the role of intellectual skills in knowledge work and indicate that KIF's work environment is autonomous and do not have authoritative levels of hierarchy. There is absence of tangible measurement of outcomes and quality. Additionally tasks are undefined and uncertain which contributes to the high degree of complexity and ambiguity in the work and the work environment.

In this ambiguity setting, management plays an important role in creating the conducive work environment for motivating and encouraging the employees towards good performance (Badawy, 2007) There is an obligation for the management to create a conducive work environment which encourages and motivates the employees to perform well.

3.1.1 Identity in the setting of ambiguity

In the work environment of KIF, how the individual identities are constructed and affected is a factor influencing motivation of knowledge workers needs to be mentioned.

The work identity for people in KIF is of significance in this setting of ambiguity as they are supposed to invest laboriously not only their time and effort but also their feelings, thoughts and very notion of themselves (Alvesson, 2004). 'Identities are constituted, negotiated, reproduced and threatened in social interaction in the form of narratives and also in material practices' (Alvesson, 2004, p.192). In this regard, management can support identity constructions at individual level by different symbolic and material means (Alvesson, 2004). Identity is important in order to boost self-confidence and self-esteem and increase one's motivation (Alvesson, 2004). Knowledge workers need continued confirmation of identity in the setting of ambiguity to increase their motivation or else the lack of it will demotivate them (Alvesson, 2004). Since knowledge workers 'invest more of themselves in their work and they are thus more vulnerable to frustrations and lowered status' (p. 194).

3.2 Intrinsic Motivation and Extrinsic Motivation

It is important to understand the distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, since that is the basis for this thesis. Therefore I would like to first describe both the motivations and then their perceived linkages as seen in the literatures.

Porter and Lawler (1968) came up with the model of intrinsic and extrinsic work motivation. Internal motivation associated with the positive feelings of interest, enjoyment and satisfaction has been referred to as intrinsic motivation (Sansone & Harackiewicz, 2000). Intrinsic motivation is defined as the people involving in a particular activity as they perceive it as an interesting task (Gagne and Deci, 2005). Intrinsic motivation is associated with the inner self of an individual. The reward for the task is considered to be the task itself (Sansone & Harackiewicz, 2000). Intrinsically motivated people are said to be enjoying doing the task and it is said that this joy of the task is seen as the reward (Pink, 2011). Such category of people are considered to have feel good factor about their work. In relation to this, Thomas (2000) mentions in his intrinsic motivation framework the sense of meaningfulness in work purpose makes one feel good about the work. He further claims feeling of meaningfulness suggests that the employee is engaged in some work that is worthwhile. This means that the task of the employee is valuable and that the purpose of that task matters in the larger scheme of things. However Ryan and Deci (2000) say that people are intrinsically motivated for some particulars activities while they may not be for others and this particular type of activity is not the same for all. This implies everyone may not be intrinsically motivated for same type of activity. People need to experience perceived competence and be self-determination in order to maintain or enhance intrinsic motivation (Ryan and Deci, 2000). Additionally, by stimulating confidence and interest, intrinsic motivation prompts employees to handle the complicate, complex, challenging and non-routine tasks more efficiently (Gagne and Deci, 2005)

Contrary to intrinsic is the extrinsic motivation. Ryan and Deci (2000) define extrinsic motivation as the performance of an activity to achieve a separable outcome. Extrinsic motivation comes from the reward outside or external to the task such as incentive-bonus, praise, recognition etc. (Lepper & Henderlong 2000, cited in Cooper and Jayatilaka, 2006). In extrinsic motivation, it is regarded that the satisfaction of doing a task does not comes not from the task itself but from the external factors like rewards which the tasks brings in (Gagne and Deci, 2005). According to Ryan and

Deci (2000), in extrinsically motivated people there happens to be no inherent interest to do a task, but it is said to be externally prompted. In this context, the primary reason why the people are willing to do the task is that their significant others be that a family, peer group or a society value that task (Ryan and Deci, 2000). However, there it is regarded that there are different types of extrinsic motivation as mentioned by Ryan and Deci (2000). Consequently, they argue extrinsic motivation in an autonomous and competence supportive environment makes 'people feel competent related and self-determined as they carry out extrinsically valued activities' (p.65).

3.3 Intrinsic motivation in the knowledge work context

Many researchers emphasized the crucial role of intrinsic motivation to knowledge workers. I will discuss some of them here as to why are they considered as crucial.

Knowledge workers engage in creative thoughts, innovations which result into patents, copy right material, or other innovative products which constitutes intellectual capital and enhance the value of an organization (Muo, 2013). Many researchers have shown the link between creativity and intrinsic motivation. Cooper and Jayatilaka (2006) have shown through their research experiment that the creativity of a knowledge worker can be strongly influenced in a positive way with intrinsic motivation. Markova and Ford (2011) also quote that knowledge workers engage in the creative behaviors as part of their work and further say that intrinsic motivation impacts one's creativity. According to (Petroni and Colacino, 2008), knowledge workers are able to find creative solutions in their work only when they enjoy what they are doing. This enjoyment of the task is regarded to be derived from their intrinsic motivation. Thereby these researchers conclude that knowledge worker's work revolves around creativity and intrinsic motivation has positive influence on creativity and the ability to enhance creativity.

The single sided emphasis on intrinsic motivation can be seen in various academic and popular management literatures. Alvesson (2004) claims that knowledge workers are already intrinsically motivated in their work and further says that KIFs downplay the financial rewards and emphasize the intrinsic motivation. Frick (2010) also described the critical role of intrinsic motivation in knowledge workers and further argued that rewards like money could extinguish the intrinsic motivation which he regards as vital for achievement.

Additionally, the stress on intrinsic motivation can be seen in the academic literatures on leadership and innovation too. For example Phil-Thingvad (2014) says that self-leadership is vital in knowledge work and argues that it is connected to intrinsic motivation, where employee controls his actions by internal rather than by external incentives or even external influence. Jung (2001) argues that transformational leaders have stronger positive impact on subordinates' intrinsic motivation and claims that transformational leader boosts creativity, determination and intrinsic motivation through articulation of the long term goals and visions (p.187). Further Grant and Berry (2011) claim that intrinsic motivation encourages employees towards generation of new ideas thereby promoting creativity and enhancing innovative performance.

However Ryan and Deci (2000) mention that the scope for the intrinsic motivation in some context becomes limited. This is because, intrinsic motivation of the employees may not be considered by the management in the process of achieving some other organizational goals. Thus paving way to the potential role of extrinsic motivation in knowledge work.

3.4 Extrinsic motivation in knowledge work context

Some of the researchers do consider that extrinsic motivation is also important for knowledge workers and describe the role of extrinsic motivation to knowledge workers.

Eisenberger and Shanock (2003) claim that extrinsic rewards increase self-determination and perceived competence have a positive effect on intrinsic motivation. They further state that researchers regard personal recognition as a crucial motivating factor for creative scientists, citing the examples of noble laureates. Because they are excited when they are honored for their work and this is said to motivate them to work and contribute more (Eisenberger and Shanock, 2003). Similar to this, Eisenberger, Rhoades et al (1999) suggested that reward for superior performance in the routine life signals the high degree of achievement. Thereby these rewards generate a sense of achievement and perception of competence. In support of this, Risher (2013) acknowledged the fact that money is seen as an incentive to motivate employees from centuries and extrinsic motivation is still present in every organization as they cannot be eliminated fully. Additionally, Kubo and Saka (2002) also consider that knowledge workers need extrinsic motivation in the form of specific rewards like 'high salary' and 'merit based promotion in a relatively short period' (p.6). Further Kumar (2011) emphasizes that a worker can be truly motivated with the type of motivation

either extrinsic or intrinsic or both depending upon what they value more. He sees the knowledge worker motivation as a cumulative effect of both extrinsic and intrinsic motivation.

According to Risher (2013) reward systems play a crucial role in making the employees feel more valued. He says there isn't any employer who is seen as best by the employees if he has eliminated all the extrinsic rewards in the work place. Companies still depend on the policies that reward employees for the contribution made by them (Risher, 2013). Although in this context, Risher (2013) also admits that it may backfire if there is inequality and absence of standard practices. He states this poses a problem especially when the employees learn that they have been rewarded not equally with their peers.

3.5 Equity Theory of Motivation

The equity theory analyzes how the employees view the situations as unequal and how it affects their motivation at work.

The equity theory of motivation by Adams aims to explain the way that employees agree for a 'fair rate for the job' which means they tend to compare what they contribute to the employment relationship and what they receive from it in return (Pinnington and Edwards, 2000, p. 135). The contributions to the employment include employee work efforts, skills, training, education, experience etc while the returns they expect include higher compensation, recognition, status, promotion etc (Ericsson-zetterquist et al, 2011) Talking about employee contribution, Alvesson (2004) says knowledge workers 'invest more of themselves in their and are thus vulnerable to frustrations and lowered status' (p. 194). According to equity theory employees expect as much in return as they have invested, otherwise they perceive it to be unequal and dissatisfaction sets in (Pinnington and Edward, 2000; Ericsson-zetterquist et al, 2011). This in turn has a negative effect on their work commitment and motivation. Furthermore, equity theory shows that individuals are concerned not only with their reward or return but they also tend to compare what returns others who are in a similar position receive (Pinnington and Edward, 2000, p.135). Research on equity theory shows that employees are apparently more motivated when perceive these 'returns' to be fairly dispersed among people (Pinnington and Edwards, 2000). Therefore this theory provides important implications for management in relation to employee motivation.

4 Empirical Data Analysis

This chapter will provide an analysis of the empirical data collected from the eight semi-structured interviews with the knowledge workers. In the beginning a section is provided giving an insight into the knowledge work in the organizational context of Motiv AB. This is followed followed by managerial attempts to motivate. This is followed empirical findings starting with the role of the management. Then a section on intrinsic motivation of knowledge workers is presented followed by extrinsic motivation. Then the role of management is discussed. Further the section of 'priority tasks' is analysed starting with the introduction of the notion 'priority task' followed by the employee discontentment and contentment associated with that task.

4.1 Introducing Motiv AB

In this section, an overview of the organizational context will be given. Firstly the type of knowledge work in which Motiv AB is engaged is explained. The characteristics of work which is highly technical is explained in brief. Then the managerial attempts to motivate its workforce is discussed.

4.1.1 Knowledge work in Motiv AB

The organziation in this study is a Knowledge Intensive Firm engaged in high-tech knowledge work in the field of Information Technology. They provide software solutions and are a globally leading firm in their core technology. The knowledge work in this organizational conetxt is highly technical and their employees are often engaged in research work with new conecpts and methods in problem solving. The oganization is said be leading in innovation and creation of patents. Through its patents, the firm is said to be playing an active role in advancing technology through standardization and licensing. (For the purpose of maintaining anonymity, the said organization will be given a pseudonym as Motiv AB.)

4.1.2 Managerial attempts to motivate

In Motiv AB, the management tries to motivate the employees in several ways. The management empowers and encourages the employees to take the decisions in their work to a certain extent without having to consult their senior. The employees are allowed to put forth their views and new ideas, which is often considered by the management. This makes them

feel involved and motivated. Additionally they are given autonomy and power to act on their own and are allowed to take some risks unless it won't happen to be a really big one. The organization also has the rewards and recognition for the employees for their achievements. Above all, the management intends to have a good, creative working environment that facilitates the individual employees to excel in their work and grow along with the company. Overall, the management aims to create a motivational atmosphere for the employees.

4.2 Emprical Findings

This section depicts the employee perceptions which are interpreted and analyzed based on the theoretical aspects presented in the theory chapter.

4.2.1. Role of the management

Motiv AB wants to empower its employees and prompts them to take their own decision and come up with new ideas. As mentioned earlier, the management aims to give an autonomous and creative environment to its workforce. This can be seen in the quote by the manager, Respondent H.

'We encourage our employees to take decisions.. I do not interfer in their work too much. I want them to work freely. I, myself do not like micromanagement. That doesn't bring in the good working environment. In Motiv AB we always want the people to feel good in their work...(..) We recognise the good performers and appreciate them. We have incentives and rewards which are given to employees on the basis of their performance. Resondpent H (Manager)

The respondent H says about how the employees are empowered in Motiv AB. He mentions specifically that they want to have a good working environment which is autonomous and facilitates creative thinking. The management wants the employees to enjoy their work and get motivated intrinsically. Additionally management also has extrinsic rewards to motivate the employees extrinsically towards good performance.

'They give us enough freedom to think and act independently.. we need not consult our managers all the time for everything. We can take the suggestions if only needed. This is something I appreciate about this company....' Respondent C

'We are always encouraged to take our own decisions. My manager doesn't interfere in my day to day work. Of course, he is always there is guide me.' Respondent D.

In the above quotes, respondent C and respondent D indicate that the work environment is characterized by self-organization and dispersed authority which is common in KIFs like Motiv AB. This creates an autonomous work environment in KIFs which is believed to promote creative activity typical for the KIFs.

4.3 Intrinsic motivation of knowledge workers

Right in the beginning of interviews, it appeared like there is an intrinsic motivation in the employees. All the respondents appeared to be intrinsically motivated. That could be easily interpreted from their answers. It can be seen in the quotes below:

'Well.. I would say I like technical challenges. We get to know something new everyday…. I like solving all those critical problems.' Respondent D

Here it looks like respondent D enjoys doing his work. For intrinsically motivated people the enjoyment in doing the task is said to be the reward of the task. It can be observed that he has feel good factor about his work which is associated with intrinsic motivation.

'I like that my work is interesting. We have scrum deadlines to be met very often. It's sometimes very challenging… But then I like taking up challenges… we work on the cutting-edge technology' Respondent C

Respondent C gives the impression that he is intrinsically motivated too. Intrinsically motivated people get involved in a task as they perceive it to be interesting.

'It's also quite complicated architecture. But I like to tackle it. The one which drives me isn't the simple task but the ones that require a lot of energy in terms of intelligence, thinking...'
Respondent E

It can be interpreted that Respondent E experiences a sense of competence in relation to his work. His likes the work which need talent and ability or in other words compentency. This shows that he is intrinsically motivated as this category of people recognize that their work needs competence.

'My work here has a lot of learning. It has a lot of challenges too. And I like them because they make me learn new things everyday…' Respondent G

It can be seen that respondent G enjoys doing his work. He also seems to have self-determination at work since he is eager to learn new things that his work brings up daily. This is typically seen in intrinsically motivated people.

'I drive all the improvements and communicate them here in the team. It's complex sometimes, but we have intelligent people. So it has never been that difficult…. ( )…At the end of the day, it feels good.. I like my work...' Respondent H

Respondent H appears to be enjoying what he is doing and has a feel good factor about his work which is connected to intrinsic motivation. He has positive feelings about his work and feels content about his work, as he says despite of the complexities and difficulties, they are able to do it.

In general, it can be seen that all the respondents love the challenges and enjoy their work. They all looked forward to acquiring new knowledge as they seek out to learn and master something new constantly. Even though this is considered to be typical for the knowledge worker, these things show their self-determination at work. Their attitude towards the complex tasks and their problem solving skills show their creativity and their competence. Knowledge workers are said to be intrinsically motivated through learning and challenging work. And that aspect is clearly evident here. And it can also be depicted that all the respondents show a sense of satisfaction from their work as they express their liking and dedication towards their work in different ways.

This sense of satisfaction becomes more clearly evident in the quotes of F and B.

'I like my work..(my expertise)….I like it that my work influences thousands of people. It feels nice that a small snag you work on influences so many people.' F

He sees a sense of satisfaction in the fact that his work or rather his problem solving skill is impacting positively a large number of people and improving their lives. He thinks his work as

valuable, that is powerful enough to bring change. He has the feel good factor factor from that work which reforms the life of the people in the form of new technology. All these factors motivate him intrinsically. And it is the same with respondent B.

'Well... It's a pleasure to see the work you do is being developed into a real high-tech product and is in the market reaching out to big number of people.' B

Respondent B derives contentment in his work because he realizes his work is providing new advanced technology product to the mass. He is happy that his work will be useful to many people and the purpose of his work matters in the larger scheme of things.

For this reason of uplifting the lives of huge number of people, both B and F who are intrinsically motivated see their work as more meaningful. It makes them feel that their work is worthwhile. That is the reason they derive pleasure and the satisfaction from their work. For the intrinsically motivated people, the work itself is their reward.

4.4 Extrinsic motivation

In this organization, the role of extrinsic motivation which is present in the form of financial incentives, rewards, recognition or in any other form was brought up for discussion during the interview. They are the attempt by the management to motivate the employees. During the interviews, the opinions of respondents on these type of motivational methods was however a bit contradictory.

4.4.1 Financial rewards - incentives/Bonus

Motiv AB is having both financial rewards like incentives and also non-financial rewards like appreciation, praise, recognition etc. The respondents talked about the financial rewards like incentives and bonus the company offers. Also 'high salary' aspect was mentioned too.

'Even we have incentives and bonus.. bonus is not there in the recent years..We get financial incentives which is added up to the salary at the end of the year. That is performance related. We receive a rating at the end of the year and incentives are based on that. It's almost like the other companies in the industry I guess.' D

This shows that the respondents does see the existence of rewards as common factor in the industry and feels equal with the other engineers out in the industry. When Respondent D says, 'even we have incentives', he compares himself with knowledge workers in other companies out there. Hence in the absence of incentives there was a chance, he would have gotten demotivated thinking his peers in other companies receive it thus creating a feeling of inequality. In this regard, the incentive may have positive influence on his motivation and does not particularly mean to have undermining effect on his motivation.

'We get incentives as part of our compensation in the year end. It is based on our performance rating which is given on the basis. But that isn't a big deal. And there isn't much variation there in….' Respondent A

It is the same with respondent A. He doesn't give much emphasis on the incentives. He also thinks there are no major differences in the incentives paid, which makes him feel equal with his peers. However he doesn't look like he bothers much about the financial incentives.

I think Motiv AB pays high salary to its employees compared to others in the industry here. That is one of the reasons why people want to join this company. Also more than that it is the work environment where one is encouraged and rewarded for the innovate ideas. That definitely matters more,, which is available here. As it is, we are leading in patents. – Respondent H

In the above quote by the Respondent H, the high salary is considered to be a status symbol. Good compensation package is said to enhance the employee motivation. But to a knowledge worker, creative work environment with the freedom and autonomy is considered important to a greater extent. Here what is to be noted that, along with the creativity promoting environment, the monetary aspect which is high salary is mentioned too. And that is seen here as the first reason for the knowledge workers to join this company. This exhibits to some extent the positive influencing role of extrinsic motivation in knowledge workers.

The incentives are given at the end of the year. It is given based on your overall performace in that year. It's not a very big amount as such. Nothing much to brag about. – Respondent G

This respondent looks a bit disappointed about the less amount of the incentives. Neveretheless he also gives the impression that he doesn't care about it much. Also there is nothing much he can tell about the incentives. However this also gives the impression that he can be extrinsically motivated to work. That is, if he is offered a reward which he perceives as valuable

However, the respondents reacted positively or rather indifferently towards the financial rewards. Hence it has to be noted that the financial rewards didn't seemed to have any undermining effect for them. It may be due to the fact that incentives are not task based. It is given at the end of every year based on the overall performance. Also there isn't any major difference in the amount received by their peers, which is why respondents feel justifyable and get motivated according to equity theory of motivation.

4.4.2   Non-financial rewards –recognition

Further the employees referred to rewards as mainly the non-monetary rewards. These include mainly the 'recognition' part in various forms like appreciation in the team, praise through email and other forms where they felt their performance has been recognized. Respondents had mixed reaction about these rewards which is mainly in the form of recognition.

> 'We do not specifically have any rewards... My previous company had feather-on-the-cap
> reward, star performer and many other rewards for performers. But here there isn't (…)'
> respondent B

Here respondent B admits that Motiv AB does not have any proper reward system in place unlike his previous company which seemed to have many different rewards for the well performing employees. It can be seen that those rewards mentioned by him tend to include the 'recognition' part more in it. Because they recognize the performers as star performers and make them feel honored. Hence respondent B thinks employee performance was more recognized in his previous company. Similar view is further shared by respondent C:

> I have seen some companies have a systematic way of rewarding employees.. Even my earlier
> company had it……. I thought they were good…… I think..I do miss them here a bit (laugh)(......)

But that's how it has been here. I think we have recognition part a bit. Not much though -
Respondent C

The respondent C thinks the company he had previously worked had an efficient method of employee rewards and recognition. He thinks that there are no efficient practices in that regard in the Motiv AB. But he acknowledges the conditions here and appears to be ok with missing the rewards too. However he does feel that 'recognition' form is not given sufficient focus.

We do not have much of rewards or any formal recognition thing for the outstanding
performance. Oh.. yes.. we have this key contributor identification thing.. It is just between you
and your manager. So, at times when our performance is good, we get a word of praise in the
email from our manager - Respondent A

A acknowledges some form of recognition present in the company. But he regards that to be small one, which is just between him and his manager and he yearns for a bigger recognition. He looks excited about the recognition which is given to superior performance. In this case, it can be interpreted that the recognition is considered to be a crucial motivating factor for him. As same is with the respondent E.

There are rewards like....hmmm.. no they are not rewards, but there is a way of recognizing
performers and appreciating them… like we get an email from the manager. I have got it
sometimes. And yes, it did feel good. - Respondent E

Respondent E is a bit confused while talking about rewards. This implies there isn't any big or remarkable rewards that makes them stand out. Because in such case employees talk about it directly without any confusion. Nevertheless he later remembers about the rewards he got in the form of recognition which is the email from the manager. He is happy to have received it and it has created a feeling of achievement in him. It can be seen that he is motivated by the extrinsic rewards.

Yes,I do remember this incident. When I was working on a project back then. It required me to
work even on the weekends. The workload was very high at that time (…)And I spent most of my
weekends in the office working on it. And finally when it was over, my manager sent out an email
to all of us in the team, in which our team was applauded for the efforts and mine and 2 others

name were specifically mentioned as the main contributors. That felt good……. we had indeed

worked really hard - Respondent F.

Respondent F is very excited that his superior performance has been recognized and rewarded. The reward in the form of recognition has generated a sense of achievement and perception of competence in F. It can interpreted that he is really excited about the recognition of his contribution and this in turn can increase his self-determination and perceived competence having a highly positive effect on his intrinsic motivation.

In this section, the respondents weren't fully sure and aware of the available rewards. This signals that the rewards haven't been effective and there are not much rewards or recognition given to employees in Motiv AB. However they all yearn for recognition and are happy when they get it in some form. The implies that the respondents are motivated when their performance is given a recognition.

4.5 Priority task intervening employee motivation

Firstly, I will explain the concept of priority task/project in the big companies like Motiv AB. Motiv AB is a company in IT industry where various tasks and projects operate simultaneously. There are different people/team working on the different projects. Then some projects tend to be critical for the company for various reasons. For instance, it may be a project of a very big leading company in the industry or it may be a project with huge profit or it may be a project that has to be delivered urgently or for any other reason it may be regarded as a significant one. Now all the relating tasks to this project are considered important too. Since they are seen as crucial, they are given a lot of focus in the company while other tasks lack that focus. It is highlighted everywhere by the management. Naturally, people working in the priority projects get more recognition compared to others. This had an impact on their motivation.

4.5.1 Employee considerations

I will start with how the respondents viewed these priority tasks in the company. It will give insight on how the tasks are prioritized or made to look as priority by the management. In other words, this is the way the management made these tasks stand apart from the rest of the tasks or projects.

'It is certainly given importance in the organization…. (…) Managers talk about it all the time. Generally everyone talks about it. So working in that project or doing some additional task there

is different (….) .Like fixing some errors, testing or any task associated with the project gets kind of more recognized I feel.' Respondent A

Respondent A gives an overview of how the client-centered tasks/projects in the KIF are situationally fine-tuned and given the high, additional focus. These tasks are given a lot of significance by the management and it gets identified among other tasks and so does the people involved with it. These people get special recognition compared to others. In this situations the people associated with the tasks get the focus too.

'It is the focus matter everywhere. Sometimes these tasks are so much highlighted.. I feel we even talk about it while having lunch.' Respondent E

This quote by respondent E shows the intensity of focus given to these tasks at times. It becomes identified and highlighted to such extent that it is discussed even during the informal talks of the employees.

'I like to be part of that priority work or project too… I feel, there is better career growth in there. It is a very significant task since it's given a lot of stress by management too……'
Respondent F

This quote by respondent F indicates that along with the task, even the people involved in it get focused by the management and so does their work. This leads to the impression that those people have achieved more, since there is no tangible measurement of outcomes in KIFs.

"These are not always called specifically as priority projects. However everyone knows it is priority. With all the focus and attention it gets from the management, you know.. And sometimes it's mentioned that it is important. Here we don't have any special names for it, but I know that our counterparts in another city here, call it 'showstopper' and such other names in the teams……" Respondent G

This clearly shows how this priority tasks are seen as extremely important tasks. The exceptional names like 'showstopper' given by the employees reveal that it is highly prioritized and highlighted in their routine work. It is because of the extensive focus and importance given by the management.

In this section, all the above quotes show how the priority factor is given a lot of attention in KIFs like Motiv AB. And the employees naturally feel that these tasks are very significant. This is mainly because of the buildup given by the management for those tasks. The management makes them feel that it is the only valuable task in the company and rest of the tasks aren't valuable. The metaphors like showstopper clearly pinpoints that how much crucial it is as perceived by the employees. The management makes the employees to perceive it in that way. Accordingly, employees working in these projects and tasks get more focus and the recognition for their work too. Or in other words, management identifies their performance and recognizes them more for their achievement compared to others.

4.6 Employee discontentment

The employees who are not involved in these focused tasks showed a feeling of discontentment. With the low priority task in hand, they felt their task wasn't a significant one. Because the management specifically does not identify it as 'important' task. This made the employees to feel discontented. And it can be pointed out in their words:

"I feel I am very talented but, my current task is simple and of course not of that importance I guess. I cannot show much in this task (…)even if I complete this well before the time I am not sure if this will have any value…" Respondent C

Respondent C expresses how he cannot make himself or his task get recognized. Absence of recognition and the focus by the management makes him feel that his task doesn't carry much value. Additionally in this context, he also lacks confirmation of his identity. These things make him demotivated and lose interest in his work.

"I was given to solve some problems in task Y….. It was so much time consuming. And it wasn't a priority task. I couldn't focus much on my current tasks too and also I was multi-tasking and I felt I could have got more recognition, had it been a priority task." Respondent B

"Well……, I have noticed that, some time the task is very complex but then…, but it is not a high priority task…so no high focus from the organization. I had to work hard, but at the end of the day that doesn't count as much as the other one….." Respondent D

This quote by respondent B and respondent D implies that they perceive their contribution to the employment wasn't equal to their returns. Since both of them have done a lot of hard work and invested so much of themselves in their work, they expect the equal recognition for their work from the management in return. According to equity theory, the inequality they perceives in their investment and return from the work makes them dissatisfied and less committed. This has negative effect on their motivation.

"It was a small project… I was doing some additional tasks in this particular project. But I felt, they were rather simple and it wasn't that interesting to do. It wasn't any critical task."

Respondent A

In the above quote respondent A gives the idea of how the low priority task make one think that they are not valuable tasks. With the lack of perceived significance for the task, he sees the purpose of his task as less meaningful, which has an impact on his self-determination and motivation.

'from one of my previous experience…I remember…there was this project going on…. It was kind of high priority task. Management stressed it a lot in many ways from the beginning……It was not a very challenging one or something. We have done project which were more complex than this one. It was well… a project from a big company.. they are market leaders. So you see.. there was all this hype around it. People got applauded even for doing such simple tasks in it..'

Respondent B

In the quote above from respondent B, he conveys that management discriminates between the people working in high priority tasks and low priority tasks. He feels people like him who work in more challenging and complex tasks but are of low priority do not get the proper recognition from the management. According to equity theory, people compare their returns with that of their peers and feel dissatisfied if they see inequality. Comparing with himself, respondent B considers that the people working simple tasks in high priority projects apparently got more returns in the form of recognition.

In this section, it shows that respondents strongly feel that their work is not recognized compared to the people working in priority tasks. According to equity theory, this can be negative since it creates a sense of inequality when they compare themselves with their colleagues. The above respondents perceive that they contribute their skill, creativity and experience equally as their

colleagues but do not get a fair return in the form of recognition, status, promotion etc. They sense inequality and the absence of standard practices in rewards and recognition. They recognize that they have not been rewarded equally with their peers. This makes them feel demotivated. Additionally, they lack confirmation of their identity in relation to their work. These make them feel discontented. They may loose their determination at work. They aren't motivated enough by having very challenging, ambiguous work at hand but it should be a priority task with all the focus, so they get enough respect, recognition and status on the accomplishment of the task. Other tasks which are not prioritized do not get this kind of recognition. In the process of achieving some organizational goals, the management tends to ignore employee motivation.

4.7 Employee contentment

On the contrary, employees who happen to be part of the significant, focused tasks got more recognition for their work which made them feel more content in their work. This had a positive impact on their motivation. This is evident from the quotes below.

'I was a part of one important project. There were deadlines fast approaching and lots of work to do…but we got full support from the management I guess… So it was good.. And we did deliver it in time..' Respondent C

'I had got this opportunity of doing work in latest ** technology. It was the latest generation technology in the domain, I was working. It was challenging but was difficult to understand to start with ….but we had the support of the management.. we got required training...(…)Ofcourse that was a critical project.. Respondent E

The above quotes from respondents C and E specify the support and assistance from the management they got while working in the high priority project. They feel competent related. In such projects, because of the focus they get continued confirmation of identity which enhances their motivation. Respondent C experiences a sense of achievement that they were able to deliver the important project on time.

'It feels good to be part of such priority tasks. Because you get recognized for your efforts… Once I was doing this particular work in one of them. In the end, we got this appreciation email

from the manager… And yeah in the end there was a party with cake and all.. … it feels so good to be a part of such a project….' Respondent F

In the above quote, respondent F experiences a feeling of achievement from the recognition he gets for his task. He considers that he has been rewarded equally for his efforts. According to equity theory, if an employee perceives he gets in return as much as he has invested it increases his motivation and work commitment. Therefore respondent F has the feel good factor about his work which enhances his motivation.

'We worked really hard and I am satisfied with the work in it. It feels good.. we had a photo session in the end and were given a symbolic award for being part of that critical project. Working in this project has contributed to my career greatly I guess in terms of knowledge and growth. I consider that as a valuable work.' Respondent G

Similar to respondent F, respondent G perceives the reward he got for his superior performance as a high achievement. He appears very excited and honored for the reward he gets for being part of the critical project. This has a positive effect on his work commitment. He regards his work as more valuable and meaningful. He has positive feelings like satisfaction and feel good factor which increases his enjoyment at work.

In this section, it can be interpreted from the quotes of these respondents that they felt good and satisfied about their work. They felt particularly good about working in priority project and then for working in new, non-routine challenging work. They felt excited to get personal recognition. The respect and recognition matters for these high status, gold-collar workers. They felt that the return they got in the form of recognition was equal to what they invested in the form of hard work. This kind of recognition makes them feel special and superior in their routine work life and increases their confidence and interest in work. This is said to increase their self-determination. This situation also implies that the management constructed and supported their identity at work through various means which are symbolic and material.

5 Discussion

5.1 Role of intrinsic motivation – Is it really the panacea?

This chapter, presents the discussion around the empirical finding and analysis with the theoretical framework of the study.

Many literatures have perceived the intrinsic motivation as very crucial for knowledge work. They have shown a strong link between creativity and intrinsic motivation, thereby saying it is essential for the knowledge workers. Further, intrinsic motivation has also been linked to leadership and innovation, highlighting how it is prevalent in the KIFs. It is said that knowledge workers are already intrinsically motivated and perhaps don't need any extrinsic motivation. Even though the intrinsic motivation is necessary for knowledge workers to find creative solutions in their challenging and ambiguous work, it can argued on the basis of my empirical findings that it is not strong enough to be sufficient. Because the presence of strong intrinsic motivation will question the existence of equity theory. On the contrary, there happened to be the situation leading to the equity theory questioning the existence of intrinsic motivation. In other words, intrinsically motivated employees do not expect rewards as they perceive their task itself to be their reward and thus they do not compare their returns with their investment in employment or with the returns of others. Consequently, intrinsically motivated employees do not yearn for reward and recognition because they are not influenced by external factors which was not the case here. Similarly intrinsically motivated people enjoy their task while they have feel good factor about it which was again not exactly the case here. Even though they seemed to enjoy their task generally, it largely depended on whether their task was priority task or got the recognition of the management. Therefore it is evident here that extrinsic motivation is also needed for knowledge workers. There have been various studies suggesting that extrinsic motivation, particularly financial rewards decrease the intrinsic motivation. The extrinsic motivation in this study context didn't tend to undermine intrinsic motivation, but it appeared to have cumulating effect or rather enhancing effect on the intrinsic motivation which conforms with Kumar (2011), Eisenberger and Shanock (2003). If one may ask, is it not possible for any organization to eliminate all the extrinsic motivation and have only intrinsic motivation or intrinsically motivated employees? It is difficult and not something which we see around practically. Because almost all the companies especially

the well performing ones have methods for rewarding or compensating in one form or the other form for the achievement of the employees.

Over the years, researchers have highlighted only the prominent role of financial rewards in undermining intrinsic motivation. On the contrary there can be several other work environmental factors that often lead to decrements in intrinsic motivation. Perhaps some of these factors even carry the potential of doing more harm than financial rewards. Yet none of these have received more research attention like the financial rewards. As we can see from the empirical findings, like the role of the management in failing to recognize the employees for their performance and several different factors pose stronger threat to intrinsic motivation than financial rewards. Therefore it isn't easy to have and maintain the intrinsic motivation in the ambiguous setting of present day KIFs.

5.2 Essential role of extrinsic motivation

When respondents spoke of non-monetary rewards or just the 'rewards' as they referred to it, they mainly saw it from the recognition point of view. And they regarded recognition as very important. This conforms with Muo (2012), Alvesson (2004) who says that knowledge workers know their worth and expect recognition from their organization.

Coming to the literature, the role of recognition in influencing intrinsic motivation is not much touched upon by the researchers. However it can be seen from the empirical findings that recognition has an enhancing effect on the intrinsic motivation of knowledge workers. These high status workers felt honored by recognition and that didn't undermine their intrinsic motivation. On the contrary, they had a good feeling, it facilitated their self-determination and increased perceived competence and thereby gave a boost to the intrinsic motivation conforming with the thoughts of Eisenberger, Rhoades et al (1999). Typically, in KIFs they have dispersed leadership or self-leadership creating an autonomous work environment. In such autonomous and competence supportive work environment extrinsic motivation is said to make people competence related and self-detremined. Recognition also generates a great

sense of achievement and feel that they are applauded for their hard work. This also makes them feel they have got fair return for their efforts and this increases their contentment

Unintentional detrimental role of management

Management plays an important role in the employee motivation. There is an obligation on the part of the management to create a good work environment which motivates the employees. Knowledge intensive firms are expected to have a creative environment to promote employees to innovate. It is said that management strives to create conducive work environment in the knowledge intensive firms to increase intrinsic motivation that facilitates creativity and encourages the employees to innovation. Despite of the fact that it is not possible to please all the employees all the time, Management is expected to follow standard practices to reward employees and be fair to everyone. While employees expect equality and fair treatment to everyone from the management, the contradictory role of the management comes as detrimental. Even though the management does not do it intentionally, it has been a bit unfair to employees performing low priority tasks. Continued situations like this can lead to diminishing intrinsic motivation of some of the workers. Further this inequality may create conflict and misunderstandings among the employees thus creating a very unfriendly work environment. These factors may pose serious threat to the confidence and self-determination of the employees which in turn will have negative effects on the motivation and performance of the employees, effecting the performance of the organization. Additionally, it is said that knowledge workers need continued confirmation of identity in their ambiguous work setting. It is the role of the management that supports the identity constructions at individual level through various symbolic and material means. The lack of continued confirmation of identity leads to frustrations and dissatisfaction, which is what happened in this case. The role of the management didn't happen to be supportive but on the contrary it proved to be detrimental to the employees carrying out low priority tasks.

6 Conclusion

Based on the empirical findings, it can be said that the sole emphasis on the intrinsic motivation is not existent in practical situations. The intrinsic motivation is important to knowledge workers, but extrinsic motivation mainly in the form of 'recognition' is equally or at times more important to knowledge workers. Hence it can regarded that even though the intrinsic motivation is necessary for the knowledge work, it is definitely not enough. Therefore, there is the need for the managerial attempts to enhance motivation of its workforce. The knowledge workers are not always intrinsically motivated to do a task, but they tend to yearn for extrinsic motivation like recognition. In this situation, management will have to play a central role in enhancing the motivation of the employees. In other words, there is an obligation on the part of the management to be supportive in enhancing and maintaining the intrinsic motivation of employees. The role of the management becomes crucial in recognizing the performance of the employees and invoking a sense of achievement in them.

However the managerial attempts to increase the motivation of knowledge workers was perceived with mixed reactions by the respondents. While some felt motivated with the managerial attempts like rewards and recognition, others felt that their effort and hard work was not recognized by the management. This was mainly due to the absence of effective and standard managerial practices in rewarding and recognizing the employee performance. Even though knowledge workers seemed to be intrinsically motivated to certain extent, it was clear that they yearned for some extrinsic motivation. These people felt dissatisfied and demotivated at work since their work and skill went unrecognized by the management. In this context, the role of the management which is expected to be supportive didn't happen to be so. Instead, the role of the management became detrimental to the employees working in the low priority tasks. Even though it was unintentional, it is a threat to the motivation, self-confidence, work commitment and self-determination of the employees. In the long run, if unattended it may result in employees experiencing high frustration, dissatisfaction and other negative effects in their work which may prove costly to the KIFs. In the process of attaining some organizational goals, the role of the management should not come as detrimental. The management should always consider their employee motivation as the motivated employee

will be most valuable resource of the company which is crucial for the outstanding performance of the company.

6.1 For further research

This study sheds light into some of the crucial factors affecting the intrinsic motivation of knowledge workers. It also brings up the potential supportive role of the management in enhancing the motivation of knowledge workers and the unforeseen detrimental role of the management in impacting the motivation negatively. I believe there are other such factors affecting the intrinsic motivation of knowledge workers in high-tech work which are not highlighted and thus needs to be investigated. The existing literatures focus mainly on the financial rewards and its influence on the intrinsic motivation. But practically there are many other factors like the one found in this study, which have the potential of curtailing the intrinsic motivation of knowledge workers. Therefore this area calls for further in-depth research on the factors affecting the intrinsic motivation of knowledge workers.

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