

To Improve Productivity through a Goal-Oriented Approach

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Abstract: *The traditional management procedures of organizations fail to impart the motivation among employees to exceed their productive capacities in today's information-based work mode environment. In this regard, the goal orientation theory proposes that individuals pursue two unique types of objectives, namely, learning and performance goals. The relationship between goal orientation and performance in various organizational contexts has been studied extensively. The recent study was conducted by following the procedures of interpretive and inductive approach. Qualitative research was carried out to gather data from various human views and perspectives such that semi-structured interviews were carried out to examine the role of goal-oriented approach for productivity. Convenience sampling was used to conduct interviews from 10 managers and the data was analyzed using the method of thematic analysis. According to the findings of the study, a goal-oriented strategy is seen to be one that only focuses on matching business goals with individual ambitions. Furthermore, it should be noted that not everyone is in favor of employing this strategy if it is not mandated by the organization. Employee's productivity is inextricably linked to their goal orientation. Employees that are oriented on a certain goal develop tunnel vision, which is good for avoiding hyper-fixation on problems. Individual learning motivation is commonly used to students in terms of creating short-term and long-term goals.*

Keywords: Productivity, Goal-Oriented, Organization behavior towards Employees, Motivational Approach, Human Resource Performance, Motivation, Goals.

I. INTRODUCTION

Business organizations and the world in general has become significantly more competitive. A significant amount of research is being conducted to understand various aspects of work dynamics, which are aimed at enhancing work productivity (Elnanga and Imran, 2013). Researchers are interested in deciphering the psychological, managerial, and physical processes, which drive people's performance in professional work. This is particularly crucial in scenarios in which individuals fail to achieve their objectives or are faced with difficult situation even when they are working hard (Bailey et al., 2017). Increasing challenges and complexity of the external environment accelerate psychological development of employees to a different level of self-consciousness. However, in the contemporary information-based work mode setting, the conventional management mechanisms of enterprises fall short of imparting the drive among employees to transcend their productive capacities (Keyes, 2016). The goal orientation theory in this regard, propounds that individual pursue two distinct types of goals i.e., learning goal orientation and performance goal orientation. Considerable research has been conducted to understand the nexus of goal orientation and performance in various organizational context (Iqbal et al., 2015). However, significant confusion still exists regarding the extent and direction of their interrelationship. It is possible that the confusion stems from lack of knowledge about intermediate factors, which influence individual performance. Dispositional goal orientation refers to continuous and stable cognitive patterns in individuals evident from their actions, which compel them to a chronic pursuit of achievement goals in various situations in their lives (Dierdorff et al., 2020). Whereas, when this pursuit is more directed towards a certain domain, it is termed as 'domain-specific orientation'. While domain specific orientation is observed in people with psychological inclination towards mastery of a certain task, there are individuals who are highly ambitious and conscientious are observed to possess a penchant for achieving high productive capabilities. Individual performance is regarded as a product of a myriad of extrinsic and intrinsic factors, including several social, psychological,

environmental, and situational drivers. However, there is a dearth of research influence of goal-oriented approach on individual performance (Yildiz et al., 2019). Furthermore, while learning motivation is found to be related to performance enhancement during initial review of literature, the relation of individual's learning motivation with the evolution and implementation of goal-oriented approach remains a question to be definitively answered. The current research revolves around investigation of relation of goal-oriented approach with productivity in individuals. The research follows formulation of distinctive aims and objectives, which helped the researcher in deciding appropriate methodology for the research. The edifice of the current research stands on the aim to examine the ways in which productivity of work could be increased through adopting a goal-oriented approach.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Establishment of goals are fundamental motivation processes which direct people in desired direction to achieve a certain objective. In this respect, goals are a product of person's internal desire and their outward manifestation in form of action (Coghlan et al., 2014). Besides the goal content (what an individual wants to achieve), there are also purposes which determine the cause of the creation of that goal. The goal orientation explicates those two distinct types of goals are learning goal orientation and performance goal orientation (Lu et al., 2014). Goal orientation is an extensively researched domain in performance psychology, which deals with the processes and factors, which shape people's goal orientation (Nederveen, 2013). Early investigation of goal orientation was mainly concerned with performance evaluation of children and young students. It was observed that students who had high mastery-oriented approach responded to their failure with a solution and self-instruction approach (Silva et al., 2010). This helped them in maintaining a positive attitude towards learning and concomitant failure. This attitude eventually leads to higher rate of learning, thus resulting in high task improvement. Where, students with a helpless responses pattern credited failures to their perceived incompetence, leading to further deterioration of their performance (Silva et al., 2010). According to the explication of Alexander et al. (2014), learning goal orientation drives individuals to seek improvement in their knowledge and skillset. Consequently, the individual has to dive into the learning curve; face new challenging situations, experience initial setbacks, and eventually master the new skill. Whereas, performance goal orientation compels people to generally avoid excessively new and challenging tasks (Cerasoli & Ford, 2014). This is because individuals inclined towards performance goal orientation receive motivation by demonstrating their existing competence and capabilities in certain tasks, and by receiving positive feedback from peers. Hence, they are generally not interested in diving into new territories of development, because the learning curve is sure to defenestrate their existing competent image. However, Plaas et al. (2013) has propounded that even performance goal orientation does not always hinder adoption of new skills. Meanwhile, there is also demonstrated the relation between the depth of the learning curve (depending upon complexity of the new skill and person's existing capabilities) and their preference for either learning goal orientation or performance goal orientation. In continuation with the previous assertion, it was also revealed that certain individuals possess both kinds of goal orientations; however, in the majority of cases, such individuals are not trained in consciously regulating their orientation at will (Anseel et al., 2015). Anseel et al. (2015) has referred this to as the connection between goal orientation and motivation. Personal motivation has a significant emotional component, which is generally not deliberated by people. Emotional motivation could stem from experience, cognition, observed patterns, and even from avoidant behavior (motivation to avoid certain situations). Workers that are interested in learning new cycles and processes like discovering new ways to carry out their jobs successfully (Runco & Acar, 2012). They also benefit from continuous learning, as well as rehearsing previous executions (Zhang and Bartol, 2010). Learning direction helped representatives maintain their project space talents by allowing them to combine old and new ideas in order to respond to a variety of situations. Learning-directed employees regard themselves as curious, and diverse assignments pique their interest. When it comes to tackling a problem, such people are fearless and have no fear of failure (Brown & Harvey, 2021). As a result, such people's working methods are intellectual and conducive, resulting in increased inventiveness (Runco & Acar, 2012). Furthermore, learning direction is regarded as a crucial inspiring driving factor. The complexity of the errands will inspire them, and they like completing difficult tasks. They seek new challenges because of their own growth and conviction (Zhang and Bartol, 2010; Khan, et al., 2020). They saw failure in the present errands as an opportunity to grow and play out their finest later (Silva et al., 2010). To explain this disparity, researchers have proposed that mastery-approach orientation is unrelated to performance because it

requires a focus on external evaluations (e.g., what it takes to outperform others) that is separate from the task and intrapersonal focus associated with this orientation (Belenky et al., 2012). We agree that this argument is true at the interindividual level, but the researcher does not think it holds true at the intraindividual level. Williams (2018) highlighted defined mastery-approach as a changeable construct characterized by a drive to enhance knowledge and competence. They seek new challenges as a result of their own growth and conviction (Zhang and Bartol, 2010). They saw failure in the present errands as an opportunity to grow and play out their finest later (Silva, 2010). To explain this disparity, researchers have proposed that mastery-approach orientation is unrelated to performance because it requires a focus on external evaluations (e.g., what it takes to outperform others) that is separate from the task and intrapersonal focus associated with this orientation (Belenky, 2012). We agree that this argument is true at the inter individual level, but we do not think it holds true at the intra individual level. Learning and performance goal orientations are confused with each other when theory of work behavior is applied in practical scenarios. This is because discernment of an individual's inclination towards one or the other is not as simple and top-down approach to achieve behavioral changes in workers ignores nuances (Cook et al., 2016). In order to achieve more distinguishing characteristics, performance goal orientation is further categorized as performance and performance-avoidant approach. While performance approach motivates people to outperform other by demonstrating higher competence and conscientiousness, performance avoidant approach compels individuals to avoid negative judgment on their capabilities. Adopting the same framework and conception, some researchers have also identified existence of similar modes in learning, mastery and master-avoidant approach. However, despite the extensive 22 goal framework obtained through factor analysis of Elliot & McGregor (2001), the master-avoidance conception remains controversial and least developed idea in this domain of research. This is attributed to relation of mastery approach with productivity, since mastery avoidance behavior still contributes to enhancing productivity. Hence, in team scenarios such as in organizations, individuals' competence and capabilities are often viewed with respect to their actual contribution to the team instead of their personal capabilities. Goal oriented approach entails focus on specific goals, preferably concomitant with established timelines, to achieve a planned outcome. Goal driven people are motivated by an inner sense of purpose, which helps them in overcoming the difficulties during learning curve (Arnold & Wade, 2015). Moreover, from research of Cook et al. (2016), it is also shown that goal orientation has a significant impact on performance of individuals possessing performance orientation. Meanwhile, performance avoidant behavior is also functional with goal-oriented approach as it enables the individuals to avoid unnecessary and escapable challenges without deviating from the core goal (Ernst et al., 2012). Furthermore, goal orientation could also be related to individual's capability of cognitively processing environmental factors affecting their learning, hence influencing dynamics between learning and productivity (Chadwick et al., 2015). Goal orientation is related to employee performance through the mediating effects of goal level, employee creativity, self-efficacy, and individual effort. In this respect, learning goal orientation is also found to be positively related to exerting efforts, high self-efficacy, and aspiration of challenging goals (Chadwick et al., 2015). Meanwhile, employees with learning goal orientation are also found to be more proactive, adapting to new environments, and remain open to novel ideas.

III. METHOD

The major aspect of research methodology is research philosophy, which is divided into four major categories including positivism, interpretivism and pragmatism (Žukauskas, Vveinhardt & Andriukaitienė, 2018). In the current study, considering the notion of this study, interpretivist philosophy was adopted in the recent study since the purpose was to gather multiple perspectives of managers from different organisations to examine whether goal-oriented approach is effective way of increasing employees' productivity and satisfaction. As mentioned by Alharahsheh and Pius (2020), interpretivism philosophy is beneficial for qualitative studies such that textual data is analysed in a subjective manner. It was efficient for this research in terms of determining varied human behaviours and opinions regarding the effective use of goal-oriented approach in the social world. The second procedure of methodology is research approach, which is, categorized into two methods namely inductive and deductive methods of reasoning (Armat et al., 2018). Considering the recent research's aim, inductive method was adopted to determine the hidden patterns from the gathered data in the form of texts under relevant themes. In the words of Hayes and Heit (2018), inductive reasoning begins with the identification of specific observations and is aimed at presenting general conclusions. Therefore, to conduct in-depth

assessment of study objectives, inductive reasoning was used in the current study to assess the relation of goal-oriented approach with productivity in individuals. The current study was conducted by using the approach of qualitative research such that data was collected in the form of texts to determine the insights and multiple perspectives regarding the impact of goal-oriented approach on productivity of employees. As mentioned by Allan (2020), qualitative research is beneficial for carrying out analysis of the changing events, attitudes and behaviors of the participants of the study. It is thereby adopted to comprehend many facets of goal-oriented work dynamics that are targeted at increasing job productivity. In this research, data collection was performed through primary sources such as interviews were conducted from the selected respondents by asking open ended questions. The conduct of semi-structured interviews was beneficial in identifying the up-to-date and current opinions of managers who adopt goal-oriented approach for improving their employees' productivity. Furthermore, to select the study respondents in the recent study, non-probability sampling technique was utilized for determining the eligible members for the research from a huge population. In addition, from the varied techniques of sampling, convenience-sampling technique was utilized. Suen, Huang and Lee (2014) defined that convenience sampling is not only an easy-to-use approach but it also time-efficient such that researcher can be selected respondents who voluntarily like to take part in the research understanding the basic trends and concepts studied in the respective study. Therefore, in this research, convenience sampling was used to select 10 managers for the research and analyze their opinions on the measures do you think should be taken to further improve the productivity through goal-oriented approach. Data analysis for the current study was carried out by using the approach of thematic analysis such that data gathered from face-to-face semi-structured interviews was transcribed into written format and analyzed under relevant themes. The keywords were identified and studied to present exploration of study patterns and examine the relationship of goal-orientation, performance and learning motivation affects an individual's productivity. Furthermore, before collecting data via interviews, an informed consent was taken via email from all the study respondents to ensure ethical considerations of privacy and confidentiality are met during the current study.

IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

For the current study, the researcher carried out semi-structured interview with the managers of different organizations in the UK. The total number of respondents chosen for the study were 10. The themes were developed from the interview responses obtained from the respondents.

(i) Goal-oriented approach and its Significance -The researcher asked the respondents if they were aware of the goal-oriented approach and how they think it should be used. The following responses were obtained:

Respondent 1:

"I am very well aware of the goal-oriented approach and we have recently started to implement it. Goal orientation is all about person or organization focusing on tasks and the end results of those tasks. The company has recently started to focus on using the goal-oriented approach, as the upper management believed that it would help with focusing on the tasks to achieve the planned outcome. As we are still in the initial stages, I really cannot say if we are succeeding with it or not."

Respondent 4:

"I did not have any idea what is goal oriented approach. I only became aware of it when the upper management decided that it wanted to implement this approach. I am still trying to grasp the whole concept of it, but I would say that I would not use it, if it was up to me. I mean at times, we are not able to carry out a specific task owing to the various issues, such as lacking of resources or skills. This can delay the achievement of tasks in an efficient manner."

It can be observed from the aforementioned responses that goal-oriented approach emphasizes on focusing on tasks to achieve the goal of the company. However, at times, it can be difficult to carry out due to lacking of resources or skills.

(ii) Goal-oriented approach to assess individual performance - The researcher asked the respondents whether they had used the goal-oriented approach to assess individual performance in their department. The following responses were obtained.

Respondent 10:

"I have used the purpose of goal-oriented approach to assess individual performance. I made use of this particular approach by setting goals that were aligned with the corporation's objectives. By doing this, I was able to assess if individuals were able to follow the criteria and carry out the objectives in an effective way. The idea was that while goals have been set for each of them, it is imperative that they finish it within time. Majority of the individuals were able to do effectively."

Respondent 8:

"No. I have not used the goal-oriented approach to assess the individual performance. The reason being that I do not believe that it is important at the moment to carry out this approach. Each individual of my department is performing efficiently and I see no need to disturb them unnecessarily. Moreover, I think goal-oriented approach should only be used when the company is not able to meet its objectives, in which case, it should be the higher management's problem rather than my departments."

From the aforementioned responses, it can be observed that goal-oriented approach has been perceived as an approach that solely focuses on aligning company goals with the individual goals. Moreover, it can be stated that not every individual is in favour of using this approach, if it has not been made compulsory by the organisation.

(iii) Use of goal-oriented approach for learning motivation of individuals- The researcher asked the respondents about their opinions of using goal-oriented approach for learning motivation of individuals. The following responses were obtained.

Respondent 9:

"Frankly speaking, I think goal-oriented approach are suitable for students only. I mean the purpose of goal-oriented approach is to set goals that would help with completing tasks in an effective way. The idea of learning motivation of individual is usually applicable for students to in terms of setting short-term and long-term goals. However, implementing the same thing on employees in an organisation, well I have never done it and I don't think it would be beneficial either."

Respondent 7:

"The use of goal-oriented approach for learning motivation of individuals in an organization is indeed a good approach. I have recently started to implement it in my organization and I must say that it helps with setting the short-term and long-term goals in an effective manner. The members in my department are able to understand the ways through which they can work out their goals that would be aligned with the goals of the company as well. For instance, in the case of long-term goal, the individuals are able to assess which goal can be carried out later and would provide better success rate for the organization as well."

From the aforementioned responses, it can be observed that there are mixed reactions towards the use of goal-oriented approach for learning motivation of individuals. The aspect of learning motivation of individual is applicable when looking to assess the short and long-term goals, aligning it with the organizational goals.

(iv) Goal-oriented, performance and learning motivation link- The researcher asked the respondents regarding the relationship between goal-oriented, performances and learning motivation. The following responses were obtained.

Respondent 2:

"The relationship between goal-oriented, performances and learning motivation plays a vital role in ensuring that the members in an organization are able to perform to the best of their abilities. I would like to state here that we carry out this approach by setting the goals for the department in line with the organization's goal. The focus is to assess the performance, during which we also assess the learning motivation aspect for each individual. The key factor here is to ensure that goal-oriented, performance and learning motivation are linked with each other to result in an outcome that would be helpful for the organization."

Respondent 3:

"I have realized that using the goal-oriented approach to link performance and learning motivation has been a difficult aspect. We are trying to ensure that learning motivation is used in the area for members of the department to learn new ways of working and improve their performance, by focusing on the specific goals that have been defined for each."

From the aforementioned results, it has been analyzed that goal-orientation, performance and learning motivation are linked to each other, in light of motivating employees to learn new ways of improving their performance as per the goals that are set for each individual.

(v) Relationship of goal-orientation, performance and learning motivation affecting individual's productivity-

The phase of the interview was intended to inquire the relationship of goal orientation, performance, and learning motivation, with individual's actual productivity. Interview participants were asked, "Do you think the relationship of goal-orientation, performance and learning motivation affects an individual's productivity?". Participant 02 responded that:

"Goal orientation is definitely related to productivity of people. Orientation towards certain helps us in gaining a sort of tunnel vision, which is useful in avoiding hyper-fixation on challenges. It also motivates us to persist through difficulties during our learning process, which is imperative for an effective learning process."

Meanwhile, participant 04 remarked:

"Setting achievable goals is essential first step towards improving our productivity. Goals motivate us to better perform, especially in comparison to our peers. Setting good goals also helps in escaping the avoidant behavior trap, in which fear of failure seeps in a person's psyche, jeopardizing their ability to use their cognitive capacities".

The response of participants has emphasized on the relation of goal orientation with ability to temporarily ignore distractions during pursuit of an objective. The aspect was also found to be important in literature review as it helps throughout the learning curve.

(vi) Measure to improve the productivity through goal-oriented approach – 243 words -The last question asked the participants, "What are the measures do you think should be taken to further improve the productivity through goal-oriented approach?" Participant 05 responded that:

"I think people could their productivity by refining their goals. Often, goals are not well defined in the initial stages because of lack of knowledge about our own ignorance. Continuous reviewed and upgradation of goals are a good measure to ensure that orientation is well-directed"

Participant 08 expounded that:

"Goal orientation could help individuals to achieve a sustained level of self-motivation and self-efficacy, which I think is highly impactful on long term impactful. Long-term goals require commitment, conscientiousness, ability to self-motivate, and discipline. None of this is achievable without a concrete goal and subsequent planning".

Responses were found to be mainly inclined towards the practice of refinement of goals with subsequent stages of a planned outcome. Goal refining is also important with respect to escaping divergences and tangents during a plan, which could introduce new unanticipated problems, without the planner cognizant about their existence. Refinement of goals with increasing knowledge could also help people workers in achieving better results than their planned goal, as it was found in the literature that goal refining is impactful on self-efficacy attitude.

V. DISCUSSION

Since the current research was focused on investigating the relation of goal orientation with increment in productivity of organizational workers and people in general, the results obtained mainly relate to professional goals and definitions of productivity. Nonetheless, as propounded by Silva et al. (2010) in literature review, fundamental dynamics of goal orientation, personal motivation, and performance achievement remain similar in all human beings regardless of the context and situation. Through the first theme in the current research, it was found that goal-oriented approach provides impetus to individuals and teams to pursue the organizational goals more effectively. However, it was also found that resource availability is a significant external factor capable of thwarting the process. Meanwhile, in context of internal factors, literature indicated that lack of self-efficacy, divergent thinking, and inactive approach are some of the major hindrances for individuals in utilizing goal-oriented approach (Cook et al., 2012; Ernst et al., 2012). The literature also established that learning goal orientation is paramount for adoption of new knowledge/skill, and without a learning mindset, learning could not be converted into appropriate performance. In light of participant's responses from gathered

interview data, it was found that adoption of new skill which led to productivity becomes easier when goals are established through thorough understanding of prevalent situations and involved factors. Otherwise, goals are fated to become stagnated wishes confined to organization's documents lacking any practicality. Some team leaders in the interview also revealed their usage of goal orientation approach to assess a team members' ability to fulfil company's criteria. Whereas, some others were found to be unsure of the actual importance and practicality of goal-oriented approach in professional working. From the aforementioned responses, it is clear that there are mixed feelings about using a goal-oriented approach to increase individual learning motivation. When evaluating short- and long-term goals and matching them with organizational goals, the factor of individual learning motivation comes into play. Goal-orientation, performance, and learning motivation are all related to each other, according to the above findings, in terms of inspiring employees to learn new ways to improve their performance in accordance with the objectives that have been set for each person. However, literature of Chadwick et al. (2015) has shown that self-efficacy might be highly impactful on this dynamic because individuals with low self-efficacy have not been found to achieve high productivity and performance for long periods of time. The current research is also in agreement in this dimension as it was found that inclined to the practise of refining goals as a planned outcome progress. Goal refinement is particularly critical for avoiding divergences and tangents during a plan, since they might present new unforeseen difficulties without the planner being aware of them. Aim refining with more knowledge may also assist individuals' employees in attaining greater outcomes than their planned goal, since goal refining has been shown to have an influence on self-efficacy attitude in the research. However, findings of Belenkey et al. (2012) had also implicated that the process of learning is perceived differently by people with learning goal orientation compared to those with performance goal orientation. Learning goal-oriented individuals perceive the process of learning not as an external process, but a journey towards self-fulfillment.

VI. CONCLUSION

Goal orientation is defined as a person or organization concentrating on tasks and their outcomes. The organisation has lately begun to emphasize the goal-oriented strategy, as senior management believes it will aid in concentrating on the tasks in order to reach the desired result. Goal orientation has also been found to have a major influence on performance in those who are performance-oriented. Consequently, performance avoidant behavior, on the other hand, is compatible with a goal-oriented strategy since it allows people to avoid unneeded and avoidable problems without diverting from the main aim. The employment of a goal-oriented strategy for the aim of motivating individuals to learn has elicited conflicting views. In the current study, the relationship between goal-orientation, performance, and learning motivation was investigated, with the objective of inspiring employees to learn new ways of increasing their performance in accordance with the goals set for each individual. Setting appropriate objectives, according to the studies, also aids in avoiding the avoidant behavior trap, in which a person's dread of failure penetrates into their psyche, jeopardizing their capacity to employ their cognitive skills. Furthermore, when evaluating long and short term goals and matching them with organizational goals, the factor of individual learning motivation comes into play.

The current research was carried out by investigating how a goal-oriented approach to work could increase productivity. The relationship between goal-orientation, performance, and learning motivation and individual productivity was assessed using a qualitative method for this purpose. However, in the future, it is recommended to the researcher to carry out study by using the approach of quantitative analysis. The research found that goal orientation is a crucial process for achievement of long-term goals. It was found that long term goals require consistent conscientiousness along with temporal discipline. Goal orientation helps in minimising concomitant distractions from outside environment. Moreover, from learning vs performance aspect, it was found that although goal orientation is an overarching phenomenon, however, learning goal orientation is more impactful and related with improvement in productivity compared to performance goal orientation. This might be attributable to impact of performance avoidant orientation which impedes rapid absorption of new skills in people, which in turn, hinders their ability to excel in novel challenges in comparison to their peers. Nevertheless, the study did not find any conclusive evidence of either of the goal orientation framework being superior than the other in current organisational context.

In addition, the current study determined the results by the conduct of interviews however data collection in the future can be done in numerical format such that surveys can be conducted from a huge population depicting results in the

form of tables and figures. It is also suggested to the researcher to carry out comparative analysis of the two organizations that use goal-oriented approaches to compare the impact of the approach on their employees' satisfaction and productivity. Future researchers can also take assistance from the recent study by determining the role of goal-oriented approach on individual's learning motivation. Future research could be conducted to further explore the dynamics of goal orientation with respect to the mastery mindset in which, learning oriented individuals are motivated not by the prospect of learning itself, but by the perceived mastery of that skill in future. Such a situation presents a complex scenario in which an individual's motivation is driven by both, learning orientation and performance orientation. While the current study substantially clarified the influence of goal orientation's benefits in curtailing the divergences and distractions, further study is needed to evaluate various subjective and objective components of distractions, which hinder people's performance in organizations. In continuation of the previous statement, it is also pertinent to identify the relation of self-efficacy, self-motivation, and planned learning on individual's ability to overcome distractions.

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