Theories of Motivation

III. Reinforcement Theory of Motivation

Reinforcement theory views human behaviour as determined by its environmental consequences.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lhl5hS2JZi-U

*Law of Effect:* behaviour that results in a pleasant outcome is likely to be repeated; behaviour that results in an unpleasant outcome is not likely to be repeated.

Psychologist B.F. Skinner popularized the concept of *operant conditioning* as the process of applying the law of effect to control behaviour by manipulating its consequences.

**Operant Conditioning Strategies**

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I_XqlJq1lHA

**Positive reinforcement:** strengthens behaviour by manipulating its consequences.

*Eg.* A manager nods to express approval.

**Negative reinforcement:** behavior is strengthened by stopping, removing or avoiding a negative outcome or aversive stimulus.

*Eg.* A manager who has been nagging a worker does not nag when the worker comes in on time.

**Punishment:** discourages a behaviour by making an unpleasant consequence contingent on its occurrence.

*Eg.* a manager issues a written reprimand to an employee whose careless work creates quality problems.

**Extinction:** discourages a behaviour by making the removal of a desirable consequence contingent on its occurrence.

*Eg.* a manager observes that a disruptive employee is receiving social approval from co-workers; the manager counsels co-workers to stop giving this approval.
Positive Reinforcement

Among the reinforcement strategies, positive reinforcement deserves special attention. There are two important laws of positive reinforcement.

1) The law of contingent reinforcement: states that for a reward to have maximum reinforcing value, it must be delivered only if the desired behaviour is exhibited.

2) The law of immediate reinforcement: states that the more immediate the delivery of a reward after the occurrence of a desirable behaviour, the greater the reinforcing value of the reward.

Guidelines for positive reinforcement...

- clearly identify desired work behaviours
- maintain a diverse inventory of rewards
- recognize individual differences when allocating rewards
- follow laws of immediate and contingent reinforcement

... and punishment

- tell the person what is being done wrong/right
- make sure the punishment matches the behaviour
- administer punishment in private
- follow the laws of immediate and contingent reinforcement
Ethical Issues in Reinforcement?

Critics argue that the use of reinforcement techniques

- ignore individuality
- restrict freedom of choice
- ignore the possibility of other types of motivation

The key ethical question concerns whether it is ethical to not control behaviour well enough to serve both individual and organizational goals.

Case Studies for discussion

"Sometimes Money Can't Buy Progress"
"Motivating Your Entry Level Employees"