

Midterm Essay Examination

Chad E. Sweeton

Center for Public Administration and Policy, Virginia Tech

PAPA 5315: Government Administration I: Behavioral Skills

David Bredenkamp

March 15, 2024

Question 1

Motivation theories are crucial in understanding and managing employee behavior within organizational settings. This essay delves into a management scenario within a U.S. Army Cavalry unit, where the motivation of an outlier, Mike, was a factor. By examining three motivation theories from the literature—Expectancy Theory, Goal Theory, and Equity Theory—we gain insights into how different approaches to motivation could have influenced Mike's behavior and ultimately affected organizational outcomes (Denhardt R. D., 2021).

In the described scenario, Mike, a chemical officer within the operations cell, faced challenges that impacted his motivation and performance. Assigned mundane tasks unrelated to his military occupational specialty (MOS), Mike felt isolated and demotivated, exacerbated by ridicule from his supervisor, Tom, for any failures. This environment led to feelings of inequity, where Mike perceived that his contributions were undervalued compared to his peers.

Expectancy Theory, which posits that individuals are motivated to act based on their expectations of outcomes, offers insights into how Tom could have better motivated Mike. Tom could have increased Mike's belief that his contributions would be recognized and rewarded relatively by clearly defining Mike's role and linking his efforts to meaningful outcomes. This clarity and transparency could have motivated Mike to exert more effort and engagement in accomplishing his tasks, thus improving overall performance.

Goal Theory, when applied in conjunction with Expectancy Theory, could have further enhanced Mike's motivation and commitment to organizational goals. By setting specific and challenging goals aligned with the team's objectives, Tom could have provided Mike with a sense of purpose and achievement. Moreover, offering effective feedback based on these goals

would have allowed Mike to monitor his progress and make necessary adjustments, fostering continuous improvement and a greater sense of commitment (Denhardt R. D., 2021).

Additionally, Equity Theory offers insights into Mike's perceptions of fairness within the workplace and its impact on his motivation (Denhardt R. D., 2021). Mike likely assessed inequity in how he was treated compared to his peers, leading to a diminished effort toward organizational goals. By acknowledging and addressing any inequities, Tom could have restored Mike's sense of value and motivation, ultimately enhancing engagement and productivity within the operations cell.

Applying motivation theories such as Expectancy, Goal, and Equity Theory can significantly impact employee behavior and organizational outcomes. In the case of Mike, a better understanding and application of these theories by his supervisor, Tom, could have prevented his demotivation and eventual departure from the Army. By recognizing the importance of clarity, goal-setting, feedback, and fairness in motivating employees, leaders can create a more inclusive and supportive work environment, ultimately leading to improved performance and morale within the organization.

Question 2

In the face of organizational upheaval, such as recent layoffs and restructuring, effective management becomes paramount to navigate the challenges and maintain productivity. As a local wastewater treatment plant manager, I recognize these changes' significant impact on employee morale and productivity. While these employees suffer the stress inherent in such transitions, I have developed a comprehensive plan to alleviate stress, foster open communication, recognize outstanding performance, and identify potential leaders within the organization.

Central to this plan is implementing an open-door policy, which encourages employees to engage with me at any time to address concerns or seek assistance. This policy aims to create a culture of transparency, trust, and support where employees feel valued and heard. Being accessible and approachable, I hope to reassure employees of their job security, address any lingering fears of potential layoffs, and rebuild trust between them and the organization. Furthermore, I understand the importance of recognizing and appreciating employees who demonstrate exceptional resilience and performance despite the stressors they face. Through regularly monitoring employee performance, I will identify individuals who excel above the standard and publicly acknowledge their contributions. This recognition serves not only to motivate and inspire other employees but also to reinforce a culture of excellence and appreciation within the organization.

In addition to recognizing outstanding performance, I am committed to identifying and nurturing potential leaders within the organization. By observing employees who demonstrate strong leadership qualities, such as adaptability, initiative, and the ability to support their peers, I aim to groom them for future management positions. Through one-on-one discussions,

mentorship, and leadership development opportunities, I will provide the necessary support and guidance to help these individuals realize their leadership potential. To complement these efforts, I will implement a code of personal conduct inspired by the Minnesota Department of Transportation, which promotes employee openness, cooperation, and respect (Denhardt R. D., 2021). This code will serve as a guiding framework for fostering a positive work environment where collaboration and mutual support are the norm.

Additionally, I will conduct an organizational climate survey to gather anonymous feedback from employees and identify areas for improvement. By actively listening to employees' concerns and addressing critical issues identified through the survey, I will ensure that efforts to mitigate stressors and enhance employee well-being are targeted and effective. By implementing a multifaceted approach that includes open communication, recognition of outstanding performance, identification of leadership potential, implementation of a code of conduct, and solicitation of employee feedback, I aim to foster a resilient workforce capable of navigating challenges and driving organizational success. Through these efforts, I am confident we can create a supportive and inclusive work environment where employees feel valued, motivated, and empowered to thrive. At the end state, we will again meet and exceed our productivity goals.

Question 4

The journey toward leadership excellence is often a blend of personal growth, mentorship, and introspection. Colonel Ringo Midles epitomizes this journey, with his leadership style serving as a testament to his life experiences and dedication to personal development. Colonel Midles' unique amalgamation of servant leadership, transformational leadership, authenticity, and mentorship has influenced his leadership style and profoundly impacted my growth as a leader.

Colonel Midles' leadership style seamlessly integrates servant and transformational leadership principles. He embodies servant leadership by placing the needs of others at the forefront and embracing his role as a steward of the profession (Denhardt R. D., 2021). Colonel Midles fosters an environment conducive to growth and development, empowering his team members to learn from mistakes and make decisions autonomously. Furthermore, his embodiment of transformational leadership inspires and motivates others to strive for excellence beyond their self-interests (Denhardt R. D., 2021). Colonel Midles' authenticity and positivity naturally draw people to him, cultivating a culture of trust, empowerment, and mutual respect within the organization.

The influence of Colonel Midles' leadership on his followers is profound, inspiring them to reach new heights and contribute meaningfully to organizational success. His mentorship and guidance empower individuals to confront challenges head-on, alleviating anxieties associated with mistakes and encouraging a pursuit of excellence. Colonel Midles' unwavering belief in his team members' capabilities and commitment to fostering personal growth have catalyzed transformations in their leadership styles and personal development journeys.

Colonel Midles' mentorship and guidance have left an indelible mark on my leadership style and growth trajectory. His emphasis on resilience, optimism, and continuous improvement has reshaped how I approach setbacks and view mistakes, fostering a culture of learning and adaptation. I strive to mirror Colonel Midles' leadership qualities, including his ability to empower others, confront challenges with courage, and lead authentically with integrity (Denhardt R. D., 2021).

Colonel Ringo Midles stands as a beacon of leadership excellence, embodying the principles of servant leadership, transformational leadership, authenticity, and mentorship (Denhardt R. D., 2021). His unique blend of leadership approaches and personal qualities have inspired his followers to excel and shaped the trajectory of my own leadership journey. As I continue to evolve and grow as a leader, I will draw upon the invaluable lessons from Colonel Midles' mentorship to guide my path, aspiring to inspire others and positively impact the world.

References

Denhardt, R.B., Denhardt, J.V., Aristigueta, M.P., Rawlings, K.C. (2021). *Managing Human Behavior in public and nonprofit organizations*. CQ Press.