

## An Emperical Study of Motivation in The Indian Air Force

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*Motivation in the IAF implies dedicated, reliable and sustained performance from the air warriors under most trying and dangerous situations fraught with risks to life. Consequently, the motivational drives and needs of an air warrior will be different from that of a worker, supervisor or manager in a civilian organisation. Motivational aspects in civilian organisations are adequately covered by research and studies. However, no dedicated study has been undertaken to assess motivational drives and needs in respect of air warriors of the IAF. The motivational factors considered are achievement, power, affiliation, autonomy, esteem, safety & security and equity. The needs considered are based on Maslow's Need Hierarchy Theory.*

Motivation refers to the drive and effort to satisfy a want or goal. The motivation process begins with needs or a deficiency. These needs vary in intensity and over time among different individuals. In response to this need, the worker searches for ways to satisfy it. From the manager's viewpoint, the objective is to motivate people to behave in ways that are in the organisations best interest. Thus, motivation is important because of its significance as a determinant of performance and because of its intangible character. If the managers know about factors that create motivation, they can induce employees to work harder, faster, more efficiently and with greater enthusiasm by tailoring job assignments as per needs of the employees.

The Defence Services have unique conditions like risky nature of job, difficult and hazardous working conditions, frequent job rotation & periodic transfers. Even the uninitiated is aware that in modern day warfare, armed forces the world over have to be always ready to launch into combat at a moment's notice. A case in point is the recent Mumbai carnage. The defence personnel guard the country's borders and airspace, patrol the high seas, fight wars, fight with terrorists, assist in peacekeeping forces and in calamities. They serve the country with selfless devotion dignity and honour often paying with their own lives.

Motivation is a key factor in enabling conventional armies to win conflicts. On numerous occasions, quantitatively inferior armies have been able to have the

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upper hand because of their fighting spirit, aggressiveness, and relatively buoyant high morale. No matter how much energy is put into training the soldier, if he is not adequately motivated, the outcome will constantly be low combat performance. This means that individual actions, human imperfections, performance thresholds, and varying personalities will still influence and determine a conflict's outcome. Therefore, an understanding of motivation and application of effective leadership merits special importance in Defence Services.

The Indian Air Force is the fourth largest Air Force in the world with a highly technical and specialised fighting force. Its primary responsibility is to secure Indian airspace and to conduct aerial warfare during a conflict. The air force in any country invariably operates equipment at the cutting edge of technology. The Indian Air Force (IAF) is no exception. It boasts of the best men and machines, be it aircraft, missiles, radars or other high tech equipment. However, the complex and state-of-the-art technological holding of the IAF is no match for effectiveness and efficiency of the man behind the machine. The IAF requires highly skilled and motivated personnel to maintain, operate and fly the various weapon systems at the highest levels of efficiency and operational readiness. Regardless of the vast technological advances that warfare will undergo, its conduct will always be in the hands of human beings. Therefore, men in uniform still remain the greatest asset of the IAF. The blue uniform, apart from its smartness, also stands out as a symbol of deep patriotism, exceptional valour and extreme devotion to duty.

Many commanders today are not aware of the effects that motivation can have on operational preparedness. Therefore, it is important they learn and understand the key factors that determine positive motivation. They still hold conservative beliefs and tend to view motivation as a "carrot-and-stick" process. It is in this context that the study of various factors affecting motivation in the IAF assumes added significance. An understanding of motivational drives and needs in respect of the IAF personnel i.e. officers and personnel below officer rank (PBOR) by the commander at the junior, middle or higher level of management will facilitate understanding of individual differences in terms of needs, values and other personal characteristics, application of the correct motivational techniques for effective performance and diagnosing and rectifying causes of performance problems.

For the purpose of this study, four ranks of the Indian Air Force have been considered. These ranks are- wing commander, flying officer, sergeant and corporal. Specifically, the study aims to compare motivational drives and needs and to assess the relationship between them amongst and within the selected ranks. The wing commander and flying officer are from officer cadre. The flying officer rank is the first rank in the officer cadre and is granted at the time of commission. The wing commander rank is granted after a service of 13 years.

The sergeant and corporal are non-commissioned officers i.e. Personnel Below Officer Rank (PBOR). The rank of corporal is granted to an airman after a service of 5 years. The rank of sergeant is granted after a service of 13 years. The motivational factors considered are: Achievement, Power, Affiliation, Autonomy, Esteem, Safety & Security and Equity. The needs considered are based on Maslow's Need Hierarchy theory. These needs are: Physiological, Safety, Social, Esteem and Self Actualization.

The study is an empirical research based on quantitative approach. The research method is based on survey of respondents through a questionnaire. Two different questionnaires have been used for assessing motivational drives and needs. There were a total of 200 respondents i.e. 50 in each of the four ranks. The Five-Point Likert Scale is used for answering the questionnaire. The research technique used for data analysis is Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) as more than two groups/samples are involved i.e. four groups in this study. In addition to ANOVA technique, Duncan's Mean Test approach has also been used. Significant difference between group means is indicated by ANOVA technique whereas Duncan's Mean Test identifies the significant pairs i.e. groups within which significant difference exists.

The literature available on motivational aspects is voluminous. Exploratory studies to evaluate needs and relative importance of motivational factors/incentives undertaken in Indian context till date, primarily covers workers, supervisors and managers in sectors such as industries, government factories, public enterprises and IT organizations. In these organizations, motivational concepts are used by managers to enhance productivity and thereby profit, growth and turnover. However, the IAF and for that matter the Defence Services are not productive organisation. A career in the IAF brings opportunities and risks unfamiliar in civilian life. The yard stick for assessing Defence Services is the level of its operational preparedness rather than parameters like profit, growth and turnover. Therefore, organisational climate and work culture of the IAF will be different from civilian organisations. Motivation in the IAF implies dedicated, reliable and sustained performance from air warriors under most trying and dangerous situations fraught with risks to life. Consequently, the motivational drives and needs of an air warrior will be different from that of a worker, supervisor or manager in a civilian organisation. Motivational aspects of workers in civilian organisations are adequately covered by research and studies. However, no dedicated study has been undertaken to assess the motivational drives and needs in respect of air warriors of the Indian Air Force. Therefore, the present study is an attempt to understand motivational drives and needs of air warriors.

Assessment and comparison of motivational drives amongst selected ranks of respondents is summarized in Table-1. Achievement and Autonomy motivation are highest for wing commander rank. Power, affiliation and esteem motivation are highest for flying officer rank. Safety & security motivation is

highest for sergeant rank. The equity motivation is on par within all the four ranks reinforcing the belief that all individuals want to be treated fairly.

Table-1  
Comparison of Motivational Drives Amongst Selected Ranks

Motivational Drive	Rank
Achievement	Wing Commander
Power	Flying Officer
Affiliation	Flying Officer
Autonomy	Wing Commander
Esteem	Flying Officer
Safety & Security	Sergeantr
Equity	Equal For All

Assessment and comparison of needs amongst all ranks of respondents is summarized in Table-2. The physiological need is highest for corporal rank. The safety need is highest for sergeant rank. The social need is highest within flying officer rank. The esteem and self actualization needs are highest for wing commander rank.

Table-2  
Comparison of Needs Amongst Selected Ranks

Need	Rank
Psychological	Corporal
Safety	Sergeant
Social	Flying Officer
Esteem	Wing Commander
Self Actualization	Wing Commander

Assessment of motivational drives within each individual rank is summarized in Table-3. The drive for achievement is highest within wing commander and flying officer ranks. The drive for affiliation is highest within sergeant and corporal ranks.

Table-3  
Assessment of Motivational Drives Within Individual Ranks

Rank	Highest Motivational Drive
Wing Commander	Achievement
Flying Officer	Achievement
Sergeant	Affiliation
Corporal	Affiliation

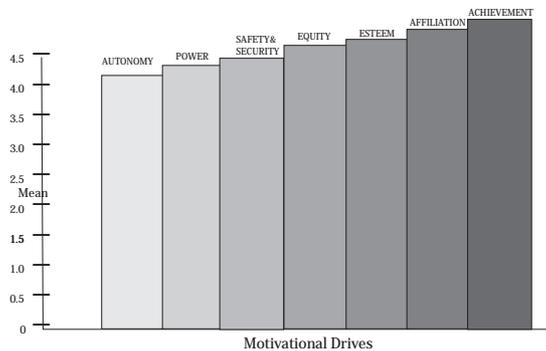
Assessment of needs within each individual rank is summarized in Table-4. The need for self actualization is highest within wing commander and flying officer ranks. The need for esteem is highest within sergeant and corporal ranks.

Table-4  
Assessment of Needs Within Individual Ranks

Rank	Highest Need
Wing Commander	Self Actualization
Flying Officer	Self Actualization
Sergeant	Esteem
Corporal	Esteem

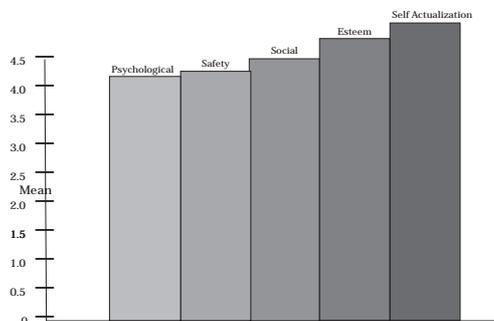
Mean of motivational drives amongst all selected ranks is shown in Figure-1. As can be seen, the achievement drive is the highest followed by affiliation, esteem, equity, safety & security, power and autonomy drives. Therefore, it may be concluded that the drive to excel, set challenging goals and attain a high standard of success is strong among respondents across all the four ranks considered for this study.

Figure-1  
Mean of Motivational Drives Amongst all Ranks



Mean of needs amongst all selected ranks is shown in Figure-2. As can be seen, the self actualization need is the highest followed by esteem, social, safety and physiological needs. Therefore, it may be concluded that the need for personal growth, self-fulfilment, increasing one's competence and becoming a better person is strong among respondents across all the four ranks considered for this study. The ranking of needs, as shown in Figure-2, matches with the Maslow's hierarchy of needs.

Figure-2  
Mean of Needs Amongst all Ranks



Following relationship has emerged between motivational drives and needs amongst selected ranks of respondents:-

- The safety need has been observed to be low for respondents for whom the esteem motivation is high.
- The esteem need has been observed to be high for respondents for whom the esteem motivation is high.
- The esteem need has been observed to be high for respondents for whom the equity motivation is high.

Following relationship has emerged between motivational drives and needs within wing commander rank:-

- The social need has been observed to be high for respondents for whom the affiliation motivation is high.
- The esteem need has been observed to be high for respondents for whom the esteem motivation is high.
- The esteem need has been observed to be high for respondents for whom the equity motivation is high.

Following relationship has emerged between motivational drives and needs within flying officer rank:-

- The esteem need has been observed to be high for respondents for whom the safety & security motivation is high.
- The esteem need has been observed to be high for respondents for whom the equity motivation is high.

For sergeant rank, the safety need has been observed to be high for respondents for whom the safety & security motivation is high.

For corporal rank, the self actualization need has been observed to be low for respondents for whom the autonomy motivation is high.

## Conclusion

Motivation is the most commonly used term to explain why a person responds under different sets of circumstances as he does. Although the level of

understanding concerning work motivation has increased considerably in the past few decades, yet there are a significant number of commanders who still hold conservative beliefs on how much their subordinates want to contribute on a job/task. They still tend to view motivation as a "carrot-and-stick" process. It is in this context that the study of various factors affecting motivation in the IAF assumes added significance. Commanders should be sensitive to variations in their sub-ordinate's needs, abilities and attributes. Such an understanding will allow the commanders to utilize most efficiently, the diverse talents among their subordinates. It is essential that commanders become intelligent consumers of behavioural data so that they function from a position of knowledge and understanding than from one of the uncertainty or ignorance.

To conclude, a commander in the IAF has to get things done through subordinates. To do this the commander should be able to motivate subordinates. But that is easier said than done. Motivation practice and theory are difficult subjects, touching on several disciplines. In spite of enormous research, basic as well as applied, the subject of motivation is not clearly understood and more often than not poorly practiced. To understand motivation one must understand human nature itself. And there lies the problem. Human nature can be very simple, yet very complex. An understanding and appreciation of this is a prerequisite to effective employee motivation in the workplace and therefore effective management and leadership. The present study is an attempt to understand motivational drives and needs of air warriors. It is hoped that findings of this study will help commanders in the IAF to understand and appreciate needs of air warriors thereby enabling commanders to improve performance of the air warriors and enhance the perceived levels of job satisfaction through application of appropriate motivational tools and techniques.



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Notes:

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