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Chanakya Niti and Organizational Motivation: Insights from the Indian Knowledge Tradition

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ABSTRACT

Despite extensive research, organizational motivational theories continued to emphasize intrinsic drive, individual agency, and value internalization. Content-based to process-based approaches are influenced by Western psychological paradigms. This kind of perspective holds limited explanatory power for organizational contexts characterized by hierarchy, material dependence, authority asymmetries, and institutional control. The study developed the theory of motivation in an organizational context through the lens of Chanakya Niti. Chanakya Niti, a classical Indian text associated with statecraft, was reinterpreted as a source of insights for motivated behavior in an organized system. Using interpretative textual analysis, the study identified four core mechanisms – material security (Artha), accountability and fear of loss (Bhaya), status and recognition (Mana), and the calibrated balance of reward and punishment (Danda-Anugraha). The Chanakyan theory conceptualizes motivation as a governed organizational outcome continuously produced and regulated through institutional design. By emphasizing governance, hierarchy, and realism, the study advanced Indian knowledge in organizational theory and extended motivation beyond humanistic approaches and individual-centric assumptions.



Keywords: *Chanakya Niti, Organizational Theory, Motivation, Governance-Based Motivation, Indian Management Thought*



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INTRODUCTION

Motivation has always been a central theme in management and organizational studies. Various theories, from classical to contemporary, such as Maslow's hierarchy of needs, Herzberg's two-factor theory, expectancy theory, and self-determination theory, provide a substantially advanced understanding of why individuals put effort into work. However, all these theories are predominantly rooted in Western psychological tradition, which mostly emphasizes motivation at an individual level. They conceptualize motivation as an internal state governed by needs (Maslow, 1943), cognition, and values. Further, Herzberg's two-factor theory distinguishes between hygiene and motivational factors, arguing that meaningful work, recognition, and achievement generate employee satisfaction and thereby enhance performance (Herzberg, 1966). Subsequent organizational theories have emphasized autonomy, self-regulation, and participation as significant determinants of employee motivation. According to Theory Y, individuals are naturally self-directed and responsible when provided with appropriate organizational conditions (McGregor, 1960). Similarly, a participative management system motivates employees by creating an environment of trust and a sense of belongingness within an organization (Likert, 1961). This conceptualizes motivation as an intrinsic element through the satisfaction of autonomy, competence, and relatedness needs (Deci & Ryan, 2009).

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However, these frameworks remain influential today but offer limited insight into motivation, as they don't provide explanatory depth for organizational context, which includes hierarchy, material dependence, authority asymmetries, institutional control, and formal governance systems. Many contemporary organizations, especially bureaucratic institutions, family-owned enterprises, public sector units, and emerging firms, operate in a structured system of hierarchy, discipline, and accountability. Organizational scholars have increasingly noted that work settings in any organization are shaped not only by individual aspirations but also by a system of control mechanisms ([Alvesson & Kärreman, 2004](#)). Organizational behavior is influenced by formal authority structures, power relations, and institutional arrangements that regulate employee conduct and organizational outcomes.

A central limitation of motivation theory is that it continues to be conceptualized as an internal psychological state. Employees' behavior cannot be understood only through individual psychology. Organizational structure, environmental conditions, and social systems significantly influence employee motivation. Organizations shape behavior through rules, norms, and regulatory pressure ([Scott, 2013](#)). The theoretical assumption further reinforces certain limitations regarding human nature. Individuals naturally seek growth, autonomy, and self-development ([Argyris, 1957](#)). However, an organizational perspective offers a more realistic understanding of human behavior; individuals tend to behave opportunistically when organizational safeguards are weak. Parallel to this limitation is a broader epistemic concern with management scholarship. Predominantly, organizational theories, even today, are reliant on Western intellectual tradition and do not fully consider motivational realities across diverse cultures. Values and expectations significantly differ across societies ([Hofstede, 1984](#)), thereby influencing employee motivation. Indigenous thinking is also capable of developing an original conceptual framework ([Tsui, 2004](#)) rather than only depending upon Western theories.

Despite such calls, the Indian knowledge system remains underutilized as a source of management and organizational behavior. Chanakya Niti is traditionally associated with governance and statecraft, and is also related to authority, discipline, and accountability. One of the earliest political realists, Kautilya ([Boesche, 2002](#)), has primarily emphasized governance, institutional stability, and strategic administration. His wisdom systematically approaches administrative order, justice, accountability, and welfare in an organizational system. However, very limited attention is devoted to Chanakya Niti's theories and wisdom with respect to organizational behavior. Existing literature on Chanakya's wisdom focuses on leadership lessons while overlooking textual interpretations related to human behavior, governance, and organizational control. This gap is significantly addressed in the paper.

The paper develops an indigenous organizational theory of motivation based on Chanakya Niti. Through interpretative textual analysis, the study identified four core organizational mechanisms shaping motivation, i.e., material security (Artha); accountability and fear of loss (Bhaya); status and recognition (Mana); and the calibrated balance of reward and sanctions (Danda-Anugraha). It demonstrates how the classical Indian Knowledge System has the potential to reflect contemporary organizational theories.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The present study attempts to develop an organizational theory of motivation through the Indian Knowledge System, with reference to Chanakya Niti.

Specific objectives of the study are:

1. To interpret Chanakya Niti as a behavioral and organizational text.
2. To identify core motivational constructs from Chanakya Niti.
3. To develop an organizational theory of motivation within the insights of Chanakya's wisdom.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. How does Chanakya interpret motivation and its regulation within an organized system?
2. What are the core constructs of organizational mechanisms derived from the Chanakyan framework?
3. How does Chanakya's understanding of human nature and governance conceptualize motivation as a governed organizational outcome?

METHODOLOGY

This study used a qualitative interpretive approach to develop an indigenous organizational theory of motivation grounded in Chanakya Niti. As the research objective is conceptual, textual analysis was considered the most appropriate approach for analyzing how motivational ideas are articulated within the text and how they contribute to contemporary organizational theory. The focus of the study is on theory building rather than empirical testing. The primary source for the study is Chanakya Niti, a classical Indian text containing aphorisms and reflections on human behavior, social conduct, ethics, and governance.

Existing literature has selected Chanakya Niti for leadership or statecraft; current research considers it a source of motivational insights relevant to organizational settings. The analytical process involved multiple readings of the text to identify the recurring themes related to human behavior, incentives, accountability, recognition, discipline, and order. Specific attention was given to passages that reflect assumptions about why humans act, cooperate, comply, or pursue desired outcomes. Constructs were developed through an abductive interpretive logic. Relevant verses and aphorisms were considered not as direct descriptions of modern management but as indicators of assumptions regarding human nature, governance, and social order. The identified constructs were interpreted within an organizational context and compared with well-established motivational theories. Some constructs emerged directly from specific verses and aphorisms, while others were inductively derived from recurring themes and patterns observed across the text.

Accordingly, Chanakya Niti is considered a source of theoretical insight and conceptual development. Before proceeding with the analysis, it is important to distinguish between Chanakya Niti and Arthashastra; both texts are associated with Chanakya (Kautilya), but they differ significantly in purpose and scope. The Arthashastra is a comprehensive treatise on statecraft, political administration, governance, economics, and diplomacy, whereas Chanakya Niti consists of aphoristic reflections on human behavior, social conduct, and practical wisdom. Both texts are attributed to Chanakya but are distinct literary works with different intellectual concerns. Though the motivational construct in this study is derived from Chanakya Niti, references to Arthashastra are also used to provide necessary contextual support or to clarify broader aspects of Chanakya's thoughts. Therefore, the framework proposed in this study is understood as a motivation theory grounded in Chanakya Niti, not as an interpretation of the Arthashastra as a whole.

HUMAN MOTIVATION IN CHANAKYA NITI

Chanakya Niti historically interpreted political strategy, governance, economics, and statecraft. Chanakya is primarily known as a political realist who is concerned with administration and strategic governance (Boesche, 2002). Kautilya's administrative and governance-based framework particularly acknowledged discipline, accountability, and institutional functioning (Kangle, 1965). Existing literature on Chanakya Niti is mainly on leadership lessons and ethical guidance. Despite growing interest in Chanakya's thought within management studies, existing literature largely treated *Chanakya Niti* as a source of leadership lessons, ethical guidance, or strategic wisdom. Consequently, its observations on motivation remain unexplored in discussions of governance, discipline, authority, and organizational order. There is a limited understanding of how Chanakya understood the generation

and regulation of motivated behavior within organized systems. The study addresses this gap by interpreting Chanakya Niti as a behavior text and extracting motivational logic from it.

Chanakya gives a distinctive approach to motivation. He does not describe motivation as an independent psychological construct; rather, discipline, loyalty, reward, and punishment reflect broader aspects of motivation. Kautilya's understanding of human conduct is significantly different from humanistic organizational theories, which place major emphasis on the intrinsic foundation of motivation. Kautilya doesn't treat hierarchy and discipline as a barrier to motivation. He theorized organizational order as an essential factor for maintaining loyalty and developing trust and coordination. Supervision, discipline, administrative regulation, and accountability are necessary for sustaining effective governance (Kangle, 1965). This approach motivates individuals through a structured system of governance within the organization rather than through external institutional control. At the same time, understanding motivation from the Chanakyan perspective extends beyond regulation and is shaped by incentives, recognition, authority, and accountability. Governance under Chanakya is deeply rooted in justice, welfare, and administration (Rangarajan, 1992). Proper administration, supervision, and fair governance are important parameters for maintaining discipline and sustaining stability (Sihag, 2009).

Chanakya holds a broader perspective, anticipating an institutional approach to organizational behavior, wherein employee behavior is shaped through rules, norms, authority, and structure (Scott, 2013). Chanakya conceptualizes motivation within organizational order, where institutional arrangements influence behavior and regulate conduct. Motivation is not isolated in individual psychology but is embedded within the governance system and is considered necessary for sustaining organizational order. Chanakya's understanding of behavior regulation parallels a reinforcement approach, in which considerable importance is given to reward and punishment. Chanakya does not advocate arbitrary coercion; rather, he encourages organizational discipline. The Chanakyan approach should not be seen as authoritarian but is governance-oriented, emphasizing organizational control and motivation.

A distinctive feature of Chanakya Niti is that it does not treat motivation as a purely internal psychological phenomenon. Motivation is understood as emerging through the interaction of authority, incentives, recognition, accountability, and discipline. Motivation is considered relational and institutional. Individuals feel motivated when organizational arrangements are aligned with personal aspirations. This perspective differs from contemporary motivational theories, which focus on needs, cognition, and intrinsic satisfaction. In Chanakya's framework, motivation is sustained through the continuous regulation of incentives, responsibilities, and consequences. Thus, motivation emerges as an organizationally produced outcome.

Ontological Assumptions of Human Nature

Theories are developed based on implicit assumptions regarding human nature. These assumptions influence our understanding of why individuals act, cooperate, compete, comply, or deviate within a system. Most contemporary motivational theories focus on needs, cognition, and individual preferences. Chanakya Niti begins with basic questions: what are humans like, how do they behave, how are they influenced by authority, uncertainty, and social interaction, and the answers provided by Chanakya differ from Western theories; he adopts a more realist view of human behavior, emphasizing self-interest, conditional loyalty, adaptability, and sensitivity to social influence.

Kautilya consistently associated human behavior with self-interest, while also focusing on governance (Verma, 1974). This approach reflects a realistic understanding of organizational life. According to Chanakya, individuals evaluate situations through practical considerations and perceived consequences rather than abstract commitments alone. Chanakya assumes that commitment is contingent, depending upon organizational incentives, security, and legitimacy; such an assumption resonates with psychological contract theory. Employees have implicit expectations from organizations in terms of reciprocity, reward, and organizational obligation (Rousseau, 1995).

There are certain similarities between the Chanakyan framework and modern organizational practices, which emphasize exchange relationships and organizational regulation. Positive relationships are maintained only if employees perceive that the exchange is beneficial and reciprocal (Blau, 1964). When reciprocal expectations are not fulfilled, relationships become unstable, and trust is weakened. Unlike psychological exchange theory, where trust violations are treated as deviations from organizational norms, Chanakya treats loyalty as conditional. It is human nature. Loyalty and commitment remain conditional, depending on the alignment of individual interest and organizational arrangements, and on organizational stability. These depend on maintaining predictable and mutually understood patterns of exchange and obligation.

Therefore, Chanakya does not assume trust to be permanent; rather, it must be continuously maintained through governance and predictable organizational conduct. A further assumption in Chanakya Niti is that human behavior is highly adaptive and responsive to changing circumstances. Individuals do not act according to fixed dispositions but change due to opportunities and risk. Chanakya treats behavior as situational. Individuals may or may not be loyal or cooperative depending on the organizational and social context. This reflects a pragmatic understanding of human conduct, according to which behavior cannot be solely explained through personality traits. Instead, human behavior is continuously shaped and reshaped by prevailing conditions.

Human conduct is not limited to personal interest but also relationships, reputation, authority, and structure (Scott, 2013). Individuals tend to observe the behavior of others, respond to social signals, and adjust to them depending on norms and power influence. Behavior is understood as socially embedded (Scott, 2013). This assumption highlights the importance of social context in shaping organizational conduct. Authority, legitimacy, and reputation occupy a central position within Chanakya's thought.

Collectively, these assumptions portray human beings as pragmatic, adaptive, socially embedded, and responsive to institutional arrangements. Rather than assuming stable loyalty or intrinsically regulated behavior, Chanakya presents a realist conception of human nature that provides the ontological foundation for the motivational constructs developed in the subsequent section.

CORE MOTIVATIONAL CONSTRUCT

Based on the ontological assumption outlined above, four core motivational constructs emerged conceptually from Chanakya's observation: material security (Artha), fear of loss and accountability (Bhaya), status and recognition (Mana), and the calibrated balance of reward and punishment (Danda-Anugraha). Together, these constructs constitute the foundational architecture of the Chanakyan organizational theory of motivation.

Artha

आपदर्थे धनं रक्षेद्द्वारान् रक्षेद्भनैरपि ।

आत्मानं सततं रक्षेद्द्वारैरपि धनैरपि ॥

(Chanakya Niti Darpan, Chapter 1, Verse 6)

Translation

One should preserve wealth for times of adversity; wealth may be used to protect family, yet above both wealth and family, one must safeguard oneself.

The verse reflects Chanakya's concern with preparedness, security, and protection against uncertainty. Wealth is not presented as a symbol of luxury or status but as a means of safeguarding stability during adverse circumstances.

Material resources, therefore, derive significance from their capacity to reduce vulnerability and preserve continuity in uncertain environments.

To understand motivated behavior from Chanakya's perspective, material security holds a central position. Consistently, Chanakya links deprivation with indiscipline, opportunism, and moral erosion, suggesting that economic insecurity undermines both loyalty and ethical restraint. Unlike Western theories that often treat material security as a lower-order need or a hygiene factor (Maslow, 1943; Herzberg et al., 1959), Chanakya regards Artha as a motivational factor that remains relevant across positions, circumstances, and stages of organizational life.

In organizational theories, compensation systems and incentive plans are indirectly associated with material security, and little attention is paid when such needs are assumed to be met. But according to Chanakya, individuals occupying higher positions will always remain sensitive to threats to material security. This realist perspective highlights the role of economic incentives and resource dependence on organizational behavior (Scott, 2013). Thus, Artha is not merely a reward. It is a structural assurance for livelihood and protection. In the absence of such assurance, organizational commitment, cooperation, and long-term stability become increasingly fragile.

Bhaya

लोकयात्रा भयं लज्जा दाक्षिण्यं त्यागशीलता ।

पञ्च यत्र न विद्यन्ते न कुर्यात्तत्र संस्थितिम् ॥

(Chanakya Niti Darpan, Chapter 1, Verse 10)

Translation

One should not reside where there is no livelihood, no fear of consequences, no sense of propriety, no civility, and no generosity.

A complementary aphorism further states:

नास्ति मानभयमनार्यस्य ।

(Chanakya Niti Darpan, Sutra 263)

Translation

The ignoble person has no fear of losing honor.

The two passages reveal an important dimension of Chanakya's understanding of human behavior. Rather than viewing fear solely as a negative emotion, Chanakya associates Bhaya with accountability and awareness of consequences. The absence of consequences is portrayed as detrimental to social order, while sensitivity to consequences encourages responsible conduct. The second aphorism reinforces the idea that individuals remain conscious of the consequences associated with their conduct and that behavioral regulation is influenced by awareness of potential outcomes. Together, these observations indicate that behavior is regulated through the anticipation of outcomes associated with one's actions.

Bhaya occupies an important place within Chanakya's understanding of organizational order. With reference to fear, Chanakya does not encourage arbitrary coercion or cruelty. Fear is understood as an awareness of potential loss arising from predictable systems of supervision and accountability. Therefore, we can say it is a rational response to enforceable organizational consequences. In contrast, humanistic motivation theories treat fear as inherently demotivating and corrosive to commitment (Deci & Ryan, 2009). However, for reliable performance, Bhaya is

increasingly acknowledged in rule-based organizational contexts ([Adler & Borys, 1996](#); [Alvesson & Karreman, 2004](#)).

From a Chanakyan perspective, accountability contributes to organizational reliability because individuals are more likely to comply with expectations when consequences are transparent, legitimate, and consistently enforced. Within Chanakya framework, Bhaya functions as a regulatory mechanism that stabilizes motivation by constraining deviance. Motivation involves not only the pursuit of rewards but also the avoidance of loss. This duality underlines the organizational nature of motivation in Chanakya Niti.

Mana

अर्थवान् सर्वलोकस्य बहुमतः ।

(Chanakya Niti Darpan, Sutra 257)

Translation

A person possessing resources and standing is respected by all.

A related aphorism further states:

महेन्द्रमप्यर्थहीनं न बहु मन्यते लोकः ।

(Chanakya Niti Darpan, Sutra 258)

Translation

Even a great person is not regarded when deprived of resources.

The two aphorisms reveal Chanakya's recognition of the importance of social esteem in shaping human behavior. Individuals do not seek material resources solely for their economic utility; they also value the respect, legitimacy, and social standing associated with them. Human beings are therefore motivated not only by security and survival but also by the desire to be acknowledged, valued, and regarded favorably within their social environment.

Chanakya Niti highlights considerable focus on mana (status, honor, and recognition) as a powerful motivation for human behavior that is beyond material and disciplinary mechanisms. Individuals seek recognition conferred through status, prestige, and organizational standing, thereby linking personal achievement with social validation. Individuals invest effort and align their behavior in pursuit of recognition, legitimacy, and social esteem within organizational settings.

Western motivation theories indirectly acknowledge status through constructs such as the need for power or achievement ([McClelland, 1961](#)), but these are considered individual personality traits. In contrast, Chanakya situates Mana directly within organizational hierarchies. Mana treats status as an organizational capability distributed through an authority structure rather than as an aspect of individual psychological makeup.

This perspective resonates with how symbolic capital, identity, and power highlight motivated behavior through recognition and positional advantage, which is independent of material incentives ([Bourdieu, 1986](#); [Fleming & Spicer, 2014](#)). In the Chanakyan framework, social status is given the same weightage as material security. reinforces the idea that employees get motivated through hierarchical differentiation as much as economic exchange.

Danda-Anugraha

Unlike artha, bhaya, and mana, which emerge directly from specific verses and aphorisms, danda-anugraha is derived from Chanakya's broader reflections on governance, discipline, and administrative order. Across the text, Chanakya repeatedly emphasizes the necessity of corrective action and the appropriate exercise of authority for maintaining social and organizational stability. Misconduct is not to be ignored, nor can desirable conduct be assumed to sustain itself without reinforcement. Organizational order, therefore, depends upon the capacity to both discourage undesirable behavior and encourage conduct that contributes to collective objectives.

The principle underlying these observations may be understood as danda-anugraha, referring to the balanced use of punishment and reward in regulating conduct. Chanakya does not advocate arbitrary punishment, excessive coercion, or unrestricted leniency. Rather, he emphasizes proportionate responses that preserve discipline while maintaining legitimacy. The objective is not control for its own sake but the maintenance of organizational order and stability.

Chanakya has given a logical approach to motivation, i.e., the balance between punishment (Danda) and reward (Anugraha). Chanakya also warns against an extreme approach. Because excessive punishment will result in fear without loyalty, excessive leniency will result in indiscipline. Therefore, it is important to create a balance between enabling and coercive forms of control (Adler & Borys, 1996). Motivation is undermined by the disproportionate and inconsistent application of rewards and punishments, rather than by intrinsic factors. Chanakya encourages continuous adjustment to the dynamic nature of motivation, rather than treating it as a static policy. Certain behavior is encouraged or discouraged through reinforcement strategies (Skinner, 1965).

A CHANAKYAN ORGANIZATIONAL THEORY OF MOTIVATION

Bringing all these four constructs together reflects motivation as an organizationally produced phenomenon emerging from the interaction of material assurance, accountability, hierarchy, and calibrated governance. Different from Western motivational theories that focus on motivation as primarily within the individual psyche, Chanakya Niti conceptualizes motivation through organizational arrangements that shape incentives, constraints, and aspirations simultaneously. Existing management research has rarely integrated this mechanism into a unified theory of motivation. Given the limited research on Chanakya Niti, this study treats Artha, Bhaya, Mana, and Danda-Anugraha as analytically distinct yet interrelated organizational constructs, laying the groundwork for a coherent Chanakyan organizational theory of motivation.

The four constructs operate as complementary organizational mechanisms rather than independent motivational drivers. Together, they create conditions under which individuals perceive security, understand expectations, receive social validation, and experience consistent governance. Motivation, therefore, emerges not from any single factor but from the alignment of economic, social, behavioral, and administrative arrangements within the organization.

The interaction among these constructs is made possible through organizational order (Rajya Niyama), which functions as the institutional context within which motivation is produced and sustained. Rule clarity, authority, legitimacy, and consistency of enforcement ensure that material incentives, recognition, accountability, and managerial interventions operate in a coordinated manner. Organizational order, therefore, does not represent a separate construct, but the enabling condition through which the motivational system remains effective.

A central contribution of the Chanakyan framework is its treatment of motivation as dynamic rather than static. Motivation is neither assumed nor permanently secured once established. Instead, it is continuously reinforced, weakened, or recalibrated through organizational practices and governance arrangements. Motivated behavior, therefore, becomes both an outcome and a source of organizational order, generating a recursive process through which institutions shape behavior and behavior, in turn, sustains institutions.

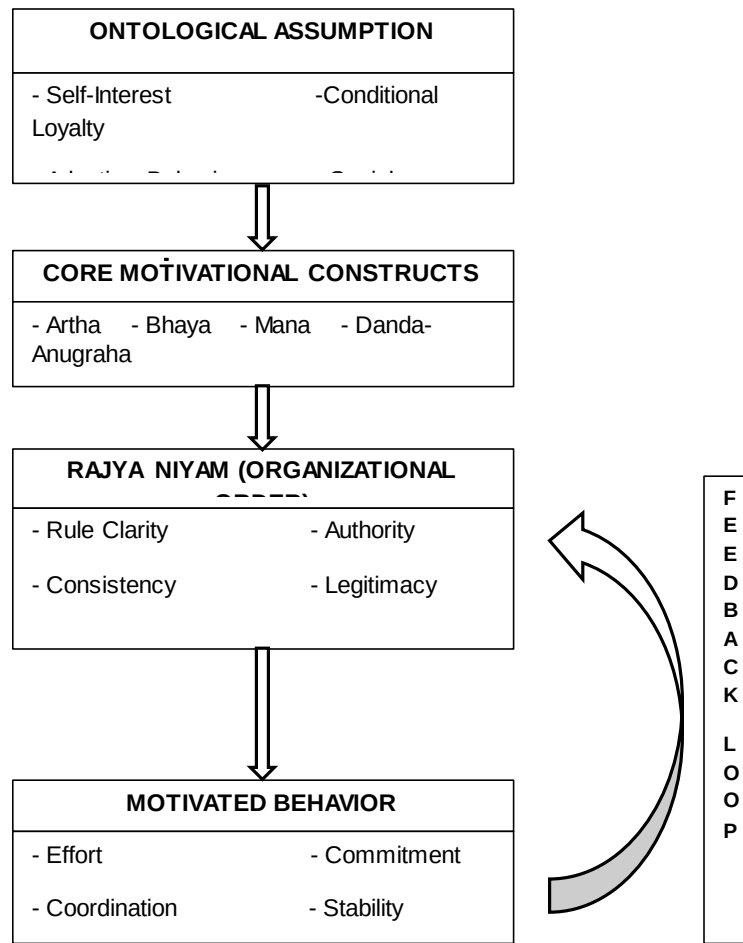


Figure 1. A Chanakyan Organizational Theory of Motivation

Table 1. Comparison of Chanakyan Organizational Theory with Major Motivation Theories

Dimension	Maslow(1943)	Herzberg et al. (1959)	McClelland (1961)	Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2009)	Chanakyan Organizational Theory
Primary Focus	Human needs	Job satisfaction and dissatisfaction	Learned needs and motives	Intrinsic motivation and psychological needs	Organizationally embedded motivation
Unit of Analysis	Individual	Individual	Individual	Individual	Individual within organizational systems
View of Human Nature	Need-seeking	Satisfaction seeking	Achievement oriented	Growth-oriented and self-regulating	Pragmatic, adaptive, and socially

Source of Motivation	Hierarchy of needs	Motivators and hygiene factor	Need for achievement, affiliation, and power	Autonomy, competence, and relatedness	Interaction of material security, accountability, recognition, and governance.
Nature of Motivation	Progressive and need-based	Satisfaction-based	Motive-based	Self-determined	Dynamic, relational, and institutionally produced
Theoretical Contribution	Explains the need for progression	Explain workplace satisfaction	Explain individual differences in motives	Explain intrinsic motivation	Explain how organizational systems generate and sustain motivation

DISCUSSION

The objective of this study is to develop an organizational theory of motivation by blending Chanakya Niti and redirecting motivation from an individual psychological construct to a produced outcome of organizational governance and institutional design.

A key literature contribution of the study is that motivation lies in its reversal of dominant causal assumptions, unlike the existing theories, which assume that motivation precedes and generates organizational order. It thereby incorporates organizational commitment, employee engagement, and cooperative behavior. Whereas the Chanakya framework proposes the opposite logic: organizational order precedes and enables motivation. In this view, motivation does not emerge from internalized values alone but from predictable alignment of incentives, sanctions, and authority structures. This reverse concept is important for understanding motivation in bureaucratic, rule-based, and resource-constrained organizations.

From an Indian knowledge concept, this study contributes to the ongoing debate on contextual and non-Western knowledge approaches to knowledge (Tsui, 2004; George et. al., 2016). Rather than adapting Western concepts to an Indian context, the paper highlights how classical Indian knowledge can generate an original organizational theory with relevance beyond its cultural origins. Importantly, this approach is not encouraged by cultural essentialism or normative romanticization. In this study, Chanakya Niti is treated as a descriptive behavioral text, rather than as moral doctrine.

CONCLUSION

The paper developed an organizational motivational theory by reinterpreting Chanakya Niti as a systematic approach to govern motivation in organized systems. The theory formalizes motivation as a governed, conditional, and reversible organizational outcome. Thereby, it shifts the core focus of motivation from individual psychology to organizational design and extends motivational theories, offering a realist framework for understanding motivation in contemporary organizations. Such context has, till now, been insufficiently addressed by dominant motivation theory. It also demonstrates the potential of the classical Indian knowledge system in the development of organizational theory.

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LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY AND SCOPE FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The study has certain limitations, which are acknowledged. Firstly, the proposed framework is derived from a qualitative textual analysis of Chanakya Niti and has not been subject to empirical validation. Future studies may use qualitative, quantitative, or mixed-method approaches to assess the applicability of the framework across different sectors and cultures. Secondly, all textual analysis, interpretation, identification, and formulation of constructs involve scholarly interpretation. An alternate reading of the text may generate different conceptual frameworks, thereby extending, refining, or challenging the framework proposed in this study through comparative textual inquiry and interdisciplinary scholarship. Despite this limitation, the study is an initial attempt to systematically theorize organizational motivation from Chanakya Niti and build a foundation for future research on indigenous approaches to management and organizational behavior.

AUTHOR DECLARATIONS

CREDIT AUTHOR STATEMENT / AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

Vaibhavi Rathore: Conceptualization, literature review, textual analysis, manuscript drafting, and revision.

Harinder Kaur Gujral: Supervision, critical review, editing, and final approval. Both authors reviewed and approved the final manuscript.

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