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A Review of Motivation Theories and Power of Mental Habits

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Abstract: ***Throughout history, philosophers, scholars, and social scientists have attempted to unearth the true nature of the inner force that drives every human action and attitude. People endeavored to know 'thyself' to realize the sources of their feelings, emotions, strengths, potentials, and senses of interest. A vast number of study findings are also available on the issue related to the core source of human motivation. Through a review of the existing concepts, the study focuses on understanding the core nature of human drive through a neurobiological evolutionary lens. A habit - induced model shall perhaps explain the needs of every human feelings, behaviors, and actions from birth to death.***

Keywords: Mental Habit, Behavior, Motivation, Need, Survival

1. Introduction

Shape, size, color, and physical structure differ among different species, but the behavior differentiates identity among humans. How a person interacts with others, responds to situations, and exhibits behaviors that speak about his character. The human spirit differs depending on different inborn behaviors (unlearned behavior) and abilities. They also differ as they learn from the living environment. Although most living beings on earth lead their life through mostly unlearned behavior as they inherit from birth, humans seem different. Human babies carry a massive capacity to learn and adapt while born compared to other species. Unlearned behaviors result from evolutionary adaptation; however, learned behaviors are the dynamic needs that originate from the surroundings. Behaviorism theory (Skinner, 1953) explains that much of human behavior is learned through conditioning rather than being innate or unlearned. It says that behavior is shaped by the consequences that follow it, such as rewards or punishments, and that this reinforcement process could lead to the acquisition of new behaviors.

While describing human conduct, Sigmund Freud emphasizes the role of unconscious thoughts and desires in shaping behavior. He suggested that behavior is driven by unconscious conflicts between the id, ego, and superego and that early childhood experiences can impact behavior. Cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986) emphasizes the role of thought processes in shaping behavior and suggests that people's beliefs, attitudes, and expectations can influence their behavior. Humanistic psychology (Maslow, 1968) has five levels of needs in shaping peoples' behavior. It explains that people have an innate drive to fulfill their potential and that their behavior is influenced by their perceptions of themselves and their environment. According to evolutionary psychology (Buss, 2015), human behavior is shaped by evolutionary adaptations that helped our ancestors survive and reproduce. It says that certain behaviors are innate and universal across cultures and have been shaped by natural selection.

The above theories highlight leading studies on the nature of the human mind and its behavior. Each of these theories possesses significant strengths and logic in their propositions; however, this study will illustrate the influence of habits in driving the human mind and its actions through a comparative analysis of existing concepts.

A Comparative Analysis of Existing Concepts

Maslaws's theory explains the five basic needs sequenced in a pyramid structure (Maslow, 1968). It explains that every human behaves through the sense of some innate need - physiological needs, safety needs, belongingness needs, needs for esteem, and self - actualization. The Maslaws theory and the theory of Clayton Alderfer conclude similar sense of needs among all humans (Alderfer, 1969) and explain why people feel, behave, and act the way they do. However, these concepts do not explain many of the behaviors of insane or neurotic people. Every human may possess a few destructive behaviors; however, the above theories do not explain their causes. It is obscured why some people take away their own life and die alone. These theories do not explain why addicted people often behave in a way that goes against their physiological safety, esteem, belongingness, and higher purpose in life.

David McClelland identified three motivators that all humans possess: a need for achievement, a need for affiliation, and a need for power (McClelland, 1961). However, it does not explain similar questions about what drives the behaviors of the insane or people with some addiction. McClelland's concept also overlooked the massive needs in human physiology. Albert Bandura explained that most human behavior is learned observationally through modeling (Bandura, 1977) but essentially does not answer similar questions above. It is hard to comprehend through this theory why even identical twins living and growing up in the same home environment behave differently. Why do people exhibit different behavior to perceived rich people and people who seem to be poor? Faith and belief shape much human behavior, but what drives humans to believe something? People love their pets and enjoy; what motivates them such behavior? These inquiries open up an idea that the mystery of human behavior may reside at some other viewpoints through which every bit of human feelings and actions can be explained. The table below highlights some unresolved areas describing human motivation leading to their behaviors.

Major Theories	Yet to Describe
Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory	• Human needs are often overlaps and do not follow sequence • The theory does not explain several actions and behaviors which are insane or addicted • No explanation for destructive behaviors existing in humans
ERG Theory	• No explanation of behaviors of lunatic or neurotic humans • The theory does not describe conscious or unconscious destructive behaviors that are often observed in many people
Reinforcement Theory	• It does not explain the needs of own biological predispositions • The theory also remained silent about the behaviors of insane or addicted and no explanation for destructive human behavior
McClelland's Theory	• It does not address several actions and behaviors of the insane or people who are suffering from particular addiction and engaged in self - destruction • Do not explain specific human behavior that originates from the internal biological conditions and the needs of reproductive impulses

Figure 1: Authors Illustration on Major Theories of Human Motivation

An Understanding of Basic Human Nature

In pursuing the core nature of human behavior, scientists have made a variety of conclusions. The ancient Greek philosopher Plato coined, human behavior flows from three primary sources: desire, emotion, and knowledge. Abraham Maslow explained that five fundamental needs form the basis for every behavioral motivation (Maslow, 1942). Augustine's doctrine of original sin proclaimed that all people were born broken and selfish, saved only through divine intervention (Augustine, 2012). Hobbes argued that humans were savagely self - centered and that salvation came not through the divine but through the social contract of civil law (Hobbs, 1651). Hobbes considers humans to be naturally vainglorious and seek to dominate others. Contrasting the above, Rousseau argued that people were born good, instinctively concerned with the welfare of others (Rousseau, 1762). Chinese philosopher Mencius said, " Human nature is good just as water seeks low land (Mencius, 2003).

Tabula rasa theory states that humans are born without built - in mental contentment; therefore, all knowledge comes from experiences or perceptions (Locke, 1690). Clayton Alderfer explained that every human behavior is shaped by the motivation of growth needs, existing needs, and relatedness (Alderfer, 1969). The concepts of David McClelland and Albert Bandura also hold profound strengths in describing human motivation, behavior, and learning. Although human motivation concepts still pass through debates, most scientists agree that each human motivation and actions result from specific biological or psychological needs. They said behaviors, either learned or innate, all originate from the needs of our life. Needs control every human action, whether those needs are consciously understood or not.

Need Shapes Every Human Response

Like all other living beings, the core human temperament comes from the *need* for self - survival and survival through offspring (Buss, 1991). Humans cannot live alone, and their survival depends on group bonding; thus, they behave in what is socially desirable. Humans materialize their own survival and the survival of their offspring through the power of social connectedness; thus, they enhance combined survival. To attain a secure environment of combined survival, people must possess positive emotions like love, sympathy, empathy, and belongingness to affiliate more. The experience of anger, selfishness, fear, disgust, fight or flight and similar emotions also originate from their survival instincts as direct or indirect responses.

The fundamental survival instinct drives humans to join the perceived superior (Tajfel, 1982); thus, people tend to behave in what suit them most to join power. The primary concern in human nature constantly attracts them to the perceived higher authority; thus, they often feel contented even having some virtual power source (Jean, 2017). The survival *needs* exhibit numerous direct and indirect responses in each human depending upon their previous experiences. The way people act to impress others and pursue power, money, and status that originates from their higher survival *needs*. The same instinct operates when people exhibit mischief or misconduct toward others. By nature, humans always want to ensure superior survival without consciously comprehending their behavior.

In humans, behavior spontaneously shapes or manifests following cause and effect (Watson, 1913), where *needs* are the causes and behaviors are the effects. The sense of need forces people to act and respond to whatever their brain perceives as the best to act. The word 'perceive' essentially encompasses the conscious understanding and unconscious evaluation of situations by the central nervous system of the human brain. Our brain constantly evaluates and decides whatever is necessary for the self's well - being. The brain evaluates the *needs* depending upon previous experiences, knowledge, and pattern of our mind. When people encounter something new, their brain evaluates the *need* for the new experience through preserved knowledge, wisdom, habit, and inborn unlearned mental skills.

As most theories have underscored, *'need'* triggers human behavior; therefore, the term *'need'* demands a deep understanding of what it means. As per motivation theories, the term 'need' refers to a state of physiological or psychological deprivation that an individual experiences, which motivates them to engage in behavior to satisfy the need. In other words, needs are the basic requirements that people have in order to survive and thrive. Biologically, *'need'* is a conscious or unconscious feeling of necessities as determined by the automatic nervous system of the brain. Therefore, our brain commands and controls our behavior in what it senses as *needed*.

Our feelings are the product of our neuro - biological functions (LeDoux, 2012) that mostly stay beyond our usual

conscious comprehension. As living beings, we experience different emotions and feelings each day and every moment. We feel hungry and eat food; we feel trusty; thus, we drink water; we travel to see the beautiful ocean beach and enjoy time with friends and families. We sense need through our feelings; we experience craving through our senses. We encounter thousands of such emotions, likings, and cravings but often remain ignorant about the core source of such feelings. These feelings, consciousness, and senses come from our brains as the brain perceives our physical or mental needs.

Behavior Architecture through Neurobiological Lens

Human needs and motivation may be comprehensively understood through a meta - analysis of the neuro - biological links to the human mind. The study of neuroscience explains a profound justification of human behavior, which can probably elucidate every human response of all types, groups, gender, and ages possessing diverse cognitive functions, irrespective of time, context, and psychosomatic conditions. Studies of the human brain have identified that every human behavior, sense, and feeling is the outcome of our brain functions and an interplay among neurotransmitters (Panksepp, 1998). It says electrically excitable cells of around 86 billion neurons and another 85 billion glial cells densely compacted in a tiny space of our skull, constantly building networks and creating command signals. Trillions of extremely sophisticated complex synaptic connections constitute giant networks inside our brain (Sporns, 2011) that profoundly direct each human response to specific situations. Our neuronal connections in the brain determine our behaviors and actions.

Scientists have identified that a significant level of connections among brain neurons exists in newborn babies (Huttenlocher, 2002). These inherited connections among neurons exhibit unlearned or inherent actions, responses, and behavior among infants. The default neuronal networks function for immediate survival needs and invest in short - term and long - term learning needs. Although human babies inherit particular neuronal connections, most parts of the brain neurons connect and form giant networks as we learn from experiences, observations and reasoning. Humans are born with the enormous capacity to learn from the environment to match any environment and adapt anywhere (Kolb & Gibb, 2011). The need for adaptation and the need for perceived adaptation drives humans to create and innovate either consciously or unconsciously. Humans are biological machines operating through massive neuronal networks, and the human brain constantly functions in what is necessary to survive and reproduce. Our life needs, feelings and comprehension of consciousness result from those ultra - microscopic neuronal networks and their functionings constantly occurring inside the skull.

Human biological functions run through a default technique, independently by the brain's central nervous system (Buzsáki, 2006), beyond someone's conscious choices. The grand design of being social creatures, humans possess an acute necessity to learn new skills and behaviors where the brain constantly evaluates and generates directions. With the need for enormous cooperation in human survival, our brain seeks every opportunity to build innovative affiliations with others. Our central nervous system always commands us to enhance growth and development to materialize our higher survival needs within society. The ultra - smart human brain constantly and continuously focuses, observes, listens, visualizes, evaluates, and learns to ensure superior survival and reproduction needs. Higher survival drives us to create innovative ideas, construct, and develop. Thus human civilization shapes through the by - product of peoples' senses of higher survival needs - unite, cooperate, innovate, and secure.

Education, wisdom, and habit play a significant role in defining superior survival needs in human life. Ordinary people dedicate themselves to pursuing money, status, name, fame, and power for perceived higher survival needs. Conversely, wise people progress through the power of unity and cooperation to materialize even higher survival opportunities. Often, some people spend their life contesting for societal power and individual growth to fulfill immediate or short - term needs. However, visionary humans dedicate themselves to eradicating status differences among people for even more significant long - term superior survival needs.

Evolutionary Purpose of Human Habits

Life is a Mass of Habits

William James wrote, *" All our life, so far as it has definite form, is but a mass of habits - practical, emotional, and intellectual - systematically organized for our weal or woe, and bearing us irresistibly toward our destiny, whatever the latter may be. " (James, 1890.*

All humans possess an inborn genetic need to survive and propagate their species. Such an urge motivates humans to display behaviors and actions in diverse forms. In childhood, self - survival needs become the priority; as such, most efforts engage in building a healthy physical body. Reproduction instincts dominate over other feelings during adulthood, and people earnestly pursue reproductive behaviors. Although the human brain constantly generates impulses for higher survival and reproduction, that function continues through building supportive habits by the brain to conserve energy. Habits are the finest output of our grand design of the brain. The human brain is only 2% of the body mass; however, it consumes around 50% to 60% of body energy during infancy and childhood (Attwell & Laughlin, 2001). Infants and children have to spend the most daily learning new skills, meaning their brain neurons engage in massive activities to build new networks through durable synaptic connections. Such brain activities consume vast energy, but the brain always seeks for every scope to conserve power. It applies the habit - building scheme and reduces energy consumption. An adult brain consumes around 20% of the body's energy as it runs by habits. An innate, default yet unconscious biological design operates, building thousands of interconnected habits through neuronal networks similar to the electronic microchip creating our vivid consciousness, behavior, feelings, and motivations.

We experience life as a mass of habits and sense our success through constructive habits. Habits are physical and mental; habits may be learned and unlearned. Although humans inherit a basket of habits as unlearned behavior, most of our living habits are shaped in our early life through repetitive experiences in daily life. People build habits when they receive similar stimulations regularly and repeatedly. Our brain always functions to build new habits but focuses on protecting the old ones. Although survival and reproduction are the most innate needs in life, habit takes control of our behavior, even sometimes superseding biological needs. Habits often take complete command of our behavior in life in the form of physical activities or mental outputs.

Warren Buffett said, “Chains of habit are too light to be felt until they are too heavy to be broken. ” Aristotle pointed out that quality of work is not an act but a habit. The Greek philosopher Plutarch explained that human character is a habit - long continued. Indeed, our life identity and success are determined by the mass of our constructive or destructive habits. The intuitive drive in response to the needs of survival and reproduction, humans learn new skills and accumulate habits. We form our habits on what is practiced and preached in our surroundings. We form habits that we observe or listen to. Faiths, customs, social rules, beliefs, sense of status, and identity are our mental habits (Clear, 2018); thus, it differs from age and culture. How we feel, sense, evaluate, like or dislike something greatly influences our psychological habits.

Our life is time bounded; we are habit - bounded too. We learn and build most of our crucial habits during childhood, and during adulthood, we mostly roll on through those habits. The degree and quality of our constructive habits help us to work faster, move faster, and accomplish tasks faster with accuracy. The quality of our physical habits determines our skill and proficiency in our work. Conversely, our psychological or mental habits define how we think, evaluate situations, comment on issues, and perceived values, beliefs, and life interests. Our individual mental habits build individual human characters, and collective psychological habits speak about our social identity. Although physical and mental habits are intertwined and often challenging to study independently, physical habits determine our technical ability, and mental habits tell us what we are.

Our Learning are Our Habits

Human survival needs are innate and may be categorized as self - survival and survival through offspring through reproduction needs; however, these needs are dynamic and can be influenced through diverse learning processes. Learning new skills improves our survival, and the legacy of learning shape society and civilization. Thus, learning is a critical necessity in humans, and that occurs through habit - building schemes. Either consciously or unconsciously, when we get exposed to new situations or stimulations, our brain neurons fire together and wire together. The process consumes enormous energy; therefore, our brain builds energy - efficient ways to save those networks. Upon similar and repeated exposure, our brain neurons fire and connect strongly but consume less and less energy. Eventually, it becomes a permanent neuronal network, and we observe it as our habit – an automated response by the combined effect of diverse types and levels of rewarding neurotransmitters. As such, when we start learning something new, it slowly transforms into our habits. When a routine develops, we instinctively feel happy to follow our patterns through the reward system in releasing neurotransmitters. Thus the reward system generates a sense of happiness to comply with the habits, and we repeat and repeat the same behavior.

When a habit gets a shape, the pattern itself becomes a source of need in our life due to the dopamine effect of the reward system. The reward system thus continuously encourages us and creates an inner force to follow the habits. When we build constructive habits, we find ourselves skilled and proficient in our behavior. Our physical habits build our technical skills though psychological habits define our identity. Physical craving may have a terminal point, but mental craving often seems endless. Physical habits like running, riding, or swimming may have the highest level of proficiency, but mental habits like pursuing money and beauty, power and status, name and fame are limitless. When a solid mental habit builds, it controls our life choices, beliefs, senses, and consciousness more than any other needs. It sometimes supersedes even our survival and reproduction needs.

In most cases, humans lead their life a little by their knowledge, logic, education or belief but a lot by habits. People with addiction act and behave by their habits. Insane and neurotic behave by the sense of survival instincts or habits they developed. People of different classes, faiths, and statuses behave differently through the influence of their mental habits. Societies get united through identical constructive mental conditioning, and people get into conflict with diverse mental habits. Living beings sense attachments with similar mental habits as they perceive safety within their identical mental condition; such instincts motivate bonding even among different species.

Mental Habits Define Human Character

Humans are predominantly defined by their mental capacity. Knowledge, education, wisdom, passion, and a sense of beauty and justice are our mental habits that develop over time. Our mental habits of willpower, sense of belongingness, group identity, pride, dignity, and honor originate as we learn from our society. Physical habits define our physical skills, but mental habits control our decisions. Humans inherit certain mental habits as inborn cognitive abilities; however, we attain most of our cognitive, social, and emotional skills by building own psychological habits from our surroundings.

The perception of beauty and ugly, rationality and judgment, and comprehension of melodious or cacophonous, is the outcome of our mental capacity. Skills like swimming, riding, driving, and marching are our physical capacity; however, senses and feeling like perception, patriotism, group identity, nationality, foresightedness, and visions are keenly related to our mental habits. The opinion of excellent or poor is the outcome of our mental patterns. Thus, the sense of beauty differs from society, time, and context, which are also essentially the consequence of our mental habits. People unite by identical psychological habits but

engage in conflict due to their diverse mental conditions. When some people engage in logical thinking, eventually, logical thinking becomes a passion; thus, they unearth scientific discoveries. The passion observed among scientists, leaders, artists, and patriots results from their mental habit of loving their own work.

Therefore, we may study human motivation through the habit lens: "**Human behaviors are defined by three interconnected mutually inclusive needs – survival needs, reproduction needs, and habit needs. "**

Figure 2: Authors Illustration of Habit Induced Motivation Concept

Habits Command over Logic and Knowledge

Building psychological habits are an invisible phenomenon that shapes over time by the influence of our biology, genetics, and impulses of the surrounding environment. Every sound we encounter, every image we observe, and every situation we visualize invests in building our mental habits. Habits may build through actual or virtual impulses, but once a habit grows, it takes control of our mind. By the default design, our brain constantly engages in safeguarding old habits. We tend to believe the first hand information because our brain wants to hold the first experience and disregard others for conserving energy. Eventually, we become resistant to new ideas and innovation when we grow older. We feel an innate urge to follow our old habits if nothing forces us to build a new one or alter some old ones. Humans inherit habits, build new habits, and transmit certain habits to their offspring through evolutionary adaptation. Practically, humans act and behave less by their knowledge and logic but a lot by their daily habits. Predominantly we respond less by our beliefs but by what habits we developed over time.

Although childhood is the best period, habit - building continues at all times. Every image we watch, every sound we hear, every smell we encounter, and every sense we visualize impacts our habit - building. Reading habits, listening to particular music, watching preferred TV shows, monitoring games and sports, browsing internet sites, using social media, and learning something new can become mental habits; thus, we experience particular passions in our life. When we develop a mental habit of learning, reading, and rational thinking, the outcome is a higher level of wisdom. When a society cultivates constructive mental habits of exhibiting respect, understanding others' perspectives, and practicing empathy, sacrifice, justice, tolerance, and compassion, the outcome is peace and tranquility.

Affiliation Originates through Mental Conditioning

Higher survival through higher identity drives us to establish self - worthiness among others. Our brain continuously evaluates and acts on what is needed to propagate our credibility. Due to such needs, we tend to display our own superiority through every possible verbal and non - verbal signature. Over time, the urge to project own status, honor, respect, and dignity turns into mental habits and we fall into the habit loop. Our status competition, power politics, craving for ranks and promotions thus become the effect of our social need – a drive that originates from the need for higher existence.

The need for social affiliation, status, and recognition originally comes from survival impulses. Physical and mental habits may sometimes stand opposite, and in such a state, we experience cognitive dissonance, conflicting minds, and dilemmas in our behavior. In daily life, we often ignore our beliefs, knowledge, and education but follow old habits. We experience social attachments, geographical attachments, group identity, family attachments, and emotional attachments with particular objects or brands as our daily life features. We also feel attached to our favorite pets, and pets also get attached to us. These attachment behavior in living beings mostly comes from mental habits, either physical or mental.

Psychological Habits Classify Group Identity

When we spot someone as a gypsy, we distinguish them by their living habits. When we identify some people as Jews, Christians, or Muslims, we essentially recognize them by their beliefs and ritual habits. Often we get formatted in our mental habits, which we practiced and perceived from childhood. We often fail to rationalize many daily actions by the command of mental habits, even being knowledgeable and wise humans. While everybody knows our life is limited to a few years and months, we do not value our time. Most people engage their lifelong efforts to earn more money, status, and limitless power though everybody knows no one can carry power, property, or status in their eternal journey. Most craving occurs due to our deep - rooted mental habits. Diverse and destructive mental habits divide us, while constructive habits generate more safety in societies. The definition of patriotism, dignity, honor, belongingness, values, principles, good life, success, or failure is the product of our mental patterns built where we live.

We often label some habits as a discipline when they are socially or organizationally accepted. Our sense of obedience, self - order, norms, and values are our mental habits. When we pursue certain collective habits, the outcome is harmony; conversely, when a society ignores the importance of constructive mental habits, they often suffer from discord. Disharmony comes from diverse and destructive mental habits. Most social, national, and even global conflicts are deeply linked with peoples' mental habits related to various senses of interest and varied perceptions.

2. Conclusion

The command of mental habits is so powerful that people even accept supreme sacrifice to uphold their mental habits like beliefs**,** dignity**,** honor**,** and pride**.** People sometimes fall into conflicting needs between survival and mental habits**.** The act of suicidal behavior results from such conflicts where mental habits like pride**,** prestige**,** love**,** or glory overrun individual's physical safety instincts**.** Destructive behaviors originate from either biological or psychological habits**.** Insane or neurotic people behave through

physiological or uncontrolled impulses of habits**.** The diversity of our national identities results from the psychological habits causing us to possess diverse nationalistic feelings**.** In pursuing the mental habits of our own identity**,** we often label people as 'we' and 'they**, (**Sapolsky**,** 2022**).** Branding differences and labeling people as 'we and they' were always the core tipping point to raise conflict and escalate combat and violence**.** In our daily life**,** we do not fight with people we love**;** we accept many sacrifices for whom we consider 'we' but fight with people we believe as 'they**.** ' Such a phenomenon is a psychological trap against unity**,** combined survival**,** and mutual progress**.** Indeed**,** diverse mental habits are the core issue in the most devastating conflict and violence**.**

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