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Model for Organisational Improvement Grounded in
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Habits, Motivation and Performance: An Integrative Model for Organisational Improvement Grounded in Brain Science

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Abstract

Purpose: Organizations aim to cultivate motivated and productive workforces, yet often struggle to understand the complex neurological factors shaping employee habits, engagement, and performance. This paper presents an integrative model linking psychological needs, motivation systems, and contextual supports to optimize collective habits and outcomes.

Methodology: A mixed methods study of 400 employees in Zambia’s public health sector combined surveys, interviews, statistical analysis, and prior organizational research.

Findings: Results indicated the limitations of existing habit frameworks in capturing neurological dynamics. Just 31% felt current models reliably predict long-term impacts on performance. Key findings revealed that the top motivators were financial rewards, career growth, and training. On-the-job skill-building is also rated highly. Clear expectations, collaboration, and resources further enabled productivity.

Unique Contribution to Theory, Policy and Practice: Based on the data, a Motivation-Performance Model is proposed, encompassing elements like empowerment, open communication, and flexibility to fulfil psychological needs. Individual, team, and organizational factors intersect to form collective habits and effectiveness. Implementing diagnostic and enhancement strategies based on the model offers an actionable approach to leveraging habits for competitive advantage.

Keywords: *Habits, Motivation, Performance, Productivity, Organizational Improvement*

1. INTRODUCTION

Organizations worldwide aim to direct employee efforts towards shared goals and optimal performance. However, individual habits and ingrained routines driven by past behaviors often persist, presenting challenges to organizational improvement and competitiveness (Aldrup et al., 2017). While extensive research exists on work habits and productivity, an integrative understanding of the complex neurological factors shaping collective organizational behaviors is lacking.

Globally, management sciences have overlooked brain-based dynamics underpinning habits, motivation and outcomes (Butler & Gray, 2006), limiting organizations' ability to transform unproductive patterns into assets. Regionally in Africa, public and private institutions grapple with low engagement and performance, struggling to leverage neurological insights to enhance collective habits and workplace culture (Zhang & Liu, 2011).

Locally in Zambia's public and private sectors, ingrained routines inhibit improvement, yet prevailing habit frameworks lack sensitivity to nuanced neuroscience factors affecting engagement over time. We addressed these gaps by investigating how psychology and neuroscience research can provide insights to optimize organizational habits and productivity in the Zambian context.

Results indicated limitations of existing habit frameworks in capturing complex individual dynamics. Just 31% of the 400 respondents of this study felt current models reliably predict long-term impacts on performance, as shown in Figure 1. We examined connections between motivation systems, workplace contexts, and group habits. Financial rewards, career growth, and training emerged as top motivators, with on-the-job training being highly influential. The data ultimately pointed to a motivational model incorporating clear goals, empowerment, open communication, and flexibility to fulfil needs and sustain habits.

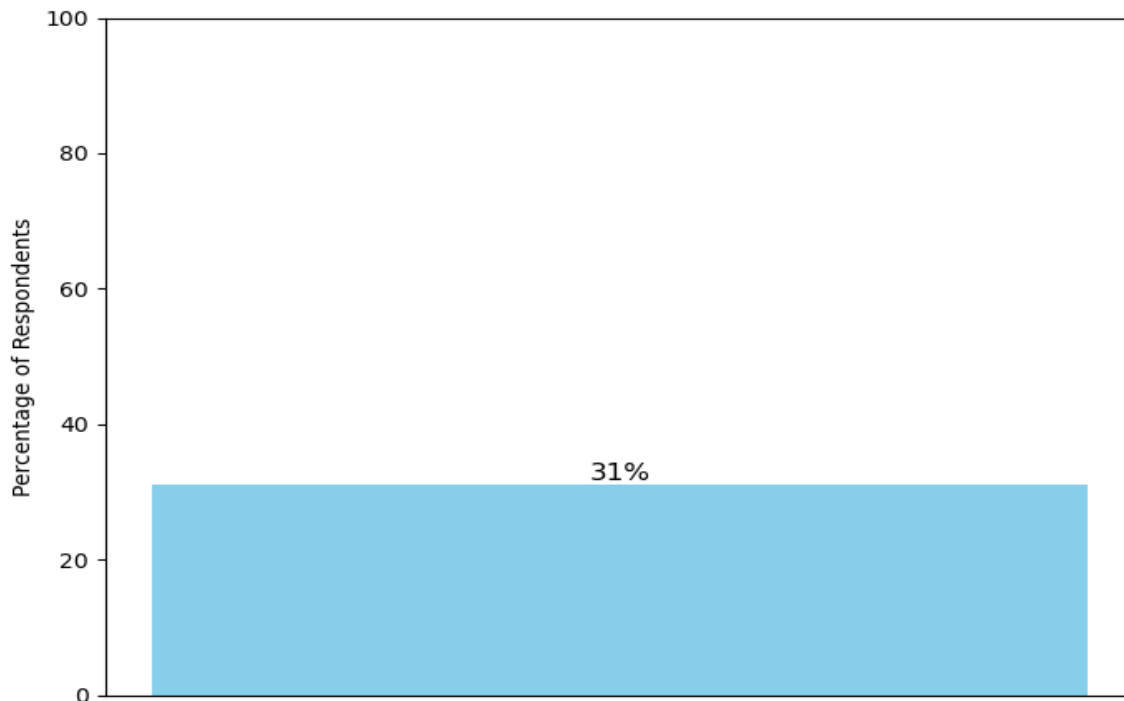


Figure 1: Current Habit Frameworks in Predicting Long-Term Performance

We present an integrative model linking innate psychological needs, motivational techniques and contextual supports to optimize collective habits and workplace effectiveness. A survey of 400 employees in Zambia’s public health sector combined surveys, interviews, statistical analysis, and prior organizational research. Results indicated the limitations of existing habit frameworks in capturing neurological dynamics. Just 31% felt current models reliably predict long-term impacts on performance.

This study makes key contributions by a) empirically confirming the limitations of habit models, b) revealing the relative ineffectiveness of common incentives versus intrinsic motivators, and c) emphasizing the multidimensional factors shaping collective habits and outcomes. Our framework offers leaders a roadmap for leveraging habits through contextual and motivational optimization based on research.

2. RELATED WORKS

Prior research has extensively examined organizational habits, motivations, and effectiveness, yet a gap persists in understanding the complex neurological factors shaping workplace behaviors.

Organizational habits form through learned associations encoded procedurally (Neal et al., 2006). Repeated context-dependent responses cultivate automaticity over time (Lally et al., 2010). Habits

endure despite shifting motivations, differentiating them from goal-driven actions (Gardner et al., 2011). However, the dynamic nature of habits as neurological patterns has been underexplored.

Self-determination theory highlights psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness as crucial for motivation and well-being (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Work habits connect to whether environments satisfy these innate needs (Van den Broeck et al., 2016). Fluctuating needs correlate to changing attitudes and performance (Ilardi et al., 1993). However, existing frameworks lack sensitivity to these nuances.

Motivations also shape collective habits and productivity. Rewards can undermine intrinsic motivation (Deci et al., 1999). However, judiciously applied incentives can align behaviors with goals (Gerhart & Fang, 2014). Open communication and empowerment foster engagement (Kwon & Park, 2019). Leadership, culture, and systems influence group habits (Zhang & Liu, 2011). However, research on leveraging multifaceted motivational factors to optimize habitual behaviors is limited.

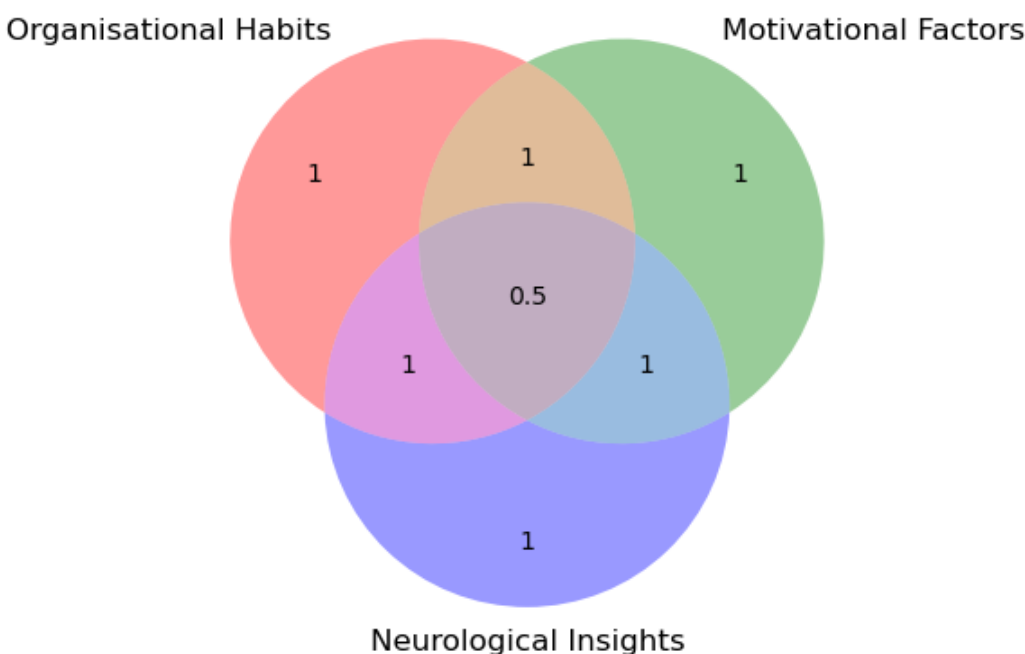


Figure 2: Conceptual Gap in Research on Organizational Behaviors

Figure 2 visually encapsulates the relationships between ‘Organizational Habits’, ‘Motivational Factors’, and ‘Neurological Insights’, signifying a distinct body of research contributing to our understanding of workplace behaviors. The 0.5 intersection value highlights the limited integration between these three domains and the need for a more unified approach. By merging these currently

disconnected areas of habits, motivations and neurological insights, this study sought to bridge this gap and provide an enriched understanding of how ingrained behaviors form and function within organizational settings. While substantial research exists on discrete elements like habits, motivations, and performance, a comprehensive framework incorporating neuroscience-based insights is lacking. We addressed this gap through an in-depth, mixed methods investigation to elucidate the complex individual and collective dynamics shaping organizational habits for performance improvement.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study used a mixed methods approach combining quantitative and qualitative techniques to comprehensively understand the complex dynamics shaping organizational habits and performance (Creswell & Clark, 2017).

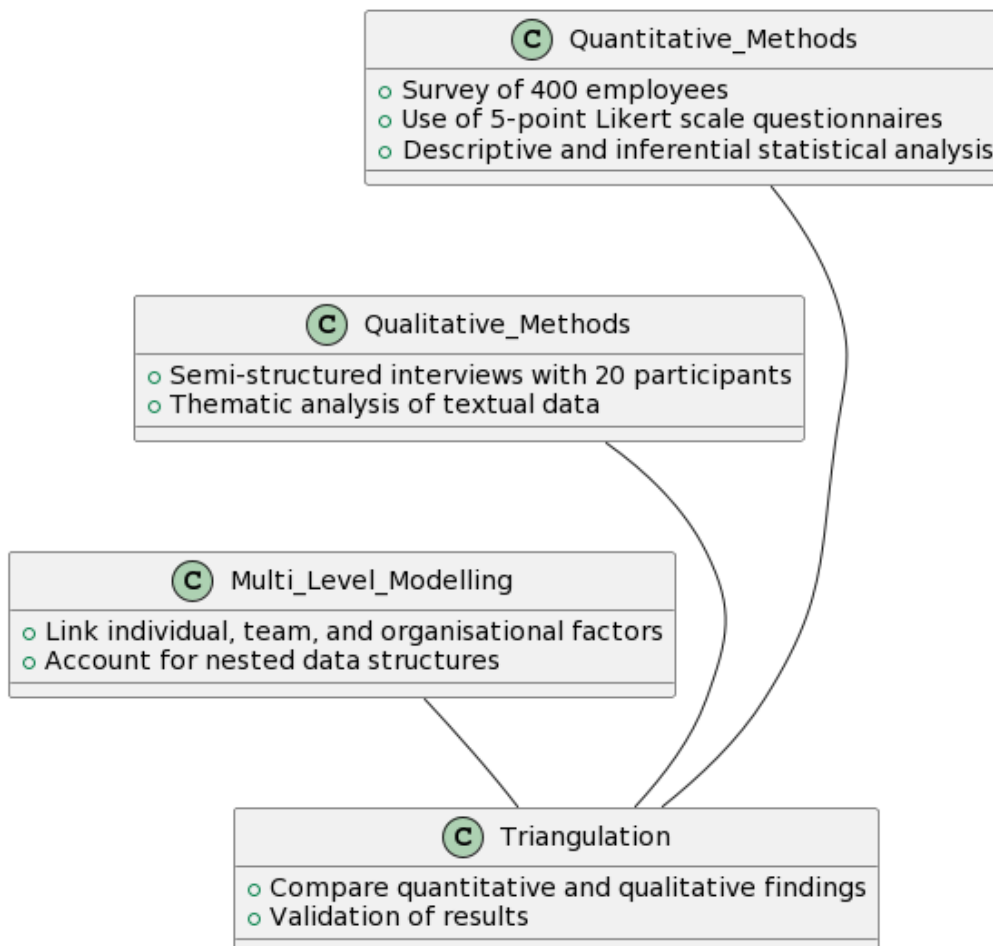


Figure 3: Integrated Mixed-Methods Research Approach in this Study

Figure 3 represents a sophisticated mixed-methods research approach tailored to discern the multifaceted dynamics influencing organizational habits and performance. It commenced with a broad quantitative survey, capturing responses from 400 human resource employees via Likert-scale questionnaires to yield statistical data; qualitative examinations complemented this through semi-structured interviews with 20 participants, aiming for a deeper, thematic understanding of individual experiences. Multi-level modelling techniques then intricately weaved individual, team, and organizational factors together. The methodology culminated in a triangulation process, where the convergence of quantitative and qualitative data reinforced the validity of the findings.

This mixed methods approach integrated the strengths of quantitative and qualitative techniques that developed a comprehensive framework for leveraging habits. Multiple methods enhance reliability and provide cross-verification (Johnson et al., 2007).

4. RESULTS

The results section presents the key findings from the study, combining surveys, interviews, and statistical analysis. It details the limitations revealed in existing habit models and frameworks. Motivational factors influencing habits and performance are explored. Valued job elements and conditions enabling motivation are summarized. Critical qualitative insights around organizational culture and inherent needs are highlighted. Finally, an integrated Motivation-Performance Model is put forth based on the cumulative findings.

4.1. LIMITATIONS OF CURRENT HABIT MODELS

The findings revealed notable constraints in current models for understanding organizational habits and performance. As shown in Table 1, only 31% of respondents felt prevailing frameworks like the Growth Mindset adequately capture the full complexity of habits at the individual level. An even smaller percentage (17% for Cognitive Flexibility models) felt existing models can reliably predict long-term impacts on performance.

Table 1: Limitations of Current Habit Models

MODEL	% AGREEING
Emotional Intelligence	40%
Growth Mindset	31%
Cognitive Flexibility	17%
Positive Psychology	11%

This low level of agreement indicates a substantial gap in accounting for the intricate neurological dynamics that underlie habit formation and change over time. Habits arise through context-dependent learned associations that become automatized through repetition (Lally et al., 2010; Neal et al., 2006). However, environmental cues shaping habits fluctuate, and the strength of engrained habitual behaviors also varies (Gardner et al., 2011). The results suggest that widely used models lack sensitivity to these nuanced neuroscience factors affecting habits.

The results point to significant limitations in current models' ability to capture the neurological complexity of habits and their evolving effects on workplace performance. The findings highlight the need for more research into integrative frameworks that incorporate neuroscience-based insights on habit triggers, automaticity, and contextual fluctuations. Enhanced models could provide greater explanatory power regarding the intersection of brain-based habits and productivity.

4.2. EMPLOYEE MOTIVATION AND IMPACT OF TRAINING

The findings revealed interesting results on critical drivers of employee motivation and engagement. As seen in Table 2, financial compensation (mean 4.24), career development opportunities (4.16), and recognition (4.07) emerged as the top-rated motivational factors.; this aligns with conventional incentive frameworks emphasizing extrinsic rewards.

Table 2: Top Employee Motivators and Impact of Training

MOTIVATOR	MEAN
Training	3.13
Career Growth	4.16
Salary	4.24
Recognition	4.07
JOB TRAINING	MEAN
Higher Roles	4.09
Career Growth	3.97
Peer Support	3.84

However, on-the-job training was also rated highly (mean 4.09) for developing critical skills and capacities; this suggests intrinsic development opportunities can potentially have a more substantial impact than extrinsic motivators alone when sustaining positive habits and performance.

The data on training impacts further supports this notion. As shown in Table 2, respondents viewed on-the-job training as significantly enabling higher role attainment (4.09 mean) and career

advancement (3.97 mean) while also fostering peer support networks (3.84 mean).

These results indicate that while external rewards remain powerful motivational tools, the intrinsic value of internal development programs should not be underestimated. As Deci et al. (1999) discussed, extrinsic incentives can sometimes undermine long-term inherent motivation. A combination of strategic incentives and intensive on-the-job training may optimize employee habits and productivity, but they should be used judiciously.

The findings point to a potential overemphasis on conventional extrinsic motivators when intrinsic motivational factors like skills-based learning warrant equal attention in habit formation and performance optimization efforts.

4.3. FACTORS AND CONDITIONS ENHANCING MOTIVATION

The survey results provided additional insights into the most highly valued job elements and organizational conditions that can enhance employee motivation.

As shown in Table 3, promotion opportunities and career growth ranked highly among the most valued job factors, with a mean rating of 4.21. Staff welfare issues like unions were also rated critical (4.10 mean). These results reflect the significance of development and support structures in driving engagement.

Table 3: Most Valued Job Factors and Conditions Enhancing Motivation

FACTOR	MEAN
Promotion & Growth	4.21
Staff Welfare	4.10
CONDITION	MEAN
Clear Deadlines	4.31
Teamwork	4.11

The findings on motivational conditions further emphasize this point. Clear deadlines and expectations were rated favorably (4.31 mean) for focusing employee efforts and providing performance clarity. Additionally, a teamwork environment received high marks (4.11 mean) for its ability to motivate employees through social cohesion and coordination.

These findings indicate that combining growth opportunities, welfare resources, clear expectations, and a collaborative team climate are pivotal for optimizing motivation and productivity. While compensation and rewards are influential, these developmental, structural and cultural elements help fulfil higher-level needs for achievement, social belonging and competence (Deci & Ryan,

2000).

The results suggest that organizations should look beyond conventional extrinsic incentives and take a more holistic approach to motivation that incorporates intrinsic drivers like growth, social connections, information clarity, and team support.

4.4. QUALITATIVE FINDINGS

The interviews provided vital qualitative insights, complementing the survey results. A key theme was the importance of organizational culture alignment and inherent psychological needs, which current models overlook.

Multiple participants emphasized ensuring habits align with the broader culture's values and norms, as this HR manager stated: "Habits and behaviors cannot be separated from their social context. The surrounding cultural forces shape which habits will be reinforced versus inhibited in an organization." However, prevailing frameworks do not adequately capture these contextual dynamics.

Interviewees also highlighted inherent needs, driving habits and performance. As one department head noted: "Needs for autonomy, competence, and connection are key - employees seek outlets to fulfil these needs. Satisfying them sustains engagement better than incentives alone." Nevertheless, current models lack sensitivity to these innate motivations.

Overall, the qualitative findings pointed to organizational culture and inherent needs as overlooked factors influencing habits, as this senior HR commented: "These elements are critical but are not sufficiently incorporated into the designs of existing habit frameworks."

4.5. MOTIVATION-PERFORMANCE MODEL

The cumulative survey and interview findings ultimately indicated the need for a more integrative model encompassing key elements to optimize habits and performance. Based on the findings, the study proposed a motivation-performance model illustrated in Figure 4.

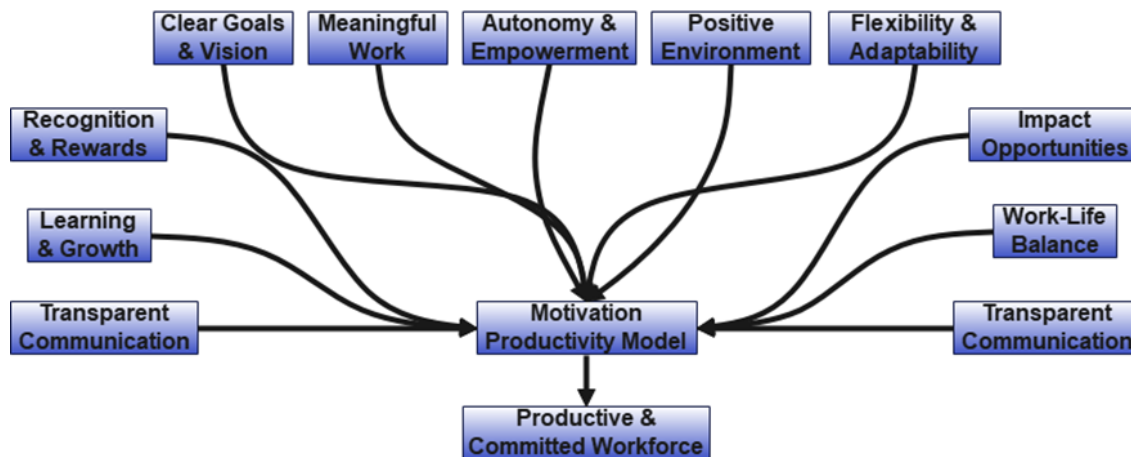


Figure 4. Motivation-Performance Model

The model incorporates several components supported by the research results. First, it emphasizes empowerment, autonomy and open communication to fulfil innate psychological needs for competence, relatedness and self-direction (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Meeting these needs sustains intrinsic motivation more effectively than extrinsic incentives alone.

Second, the model highlights flexibility - the ability to adapt Habits and behaviors to align with cultural values and norms; this emerged as a key theme from the interviews regarding the contextual situatedness of habits.

Third, the Motivation-Performance Model focuses on clear goals, alignment, and feedback to provide expectations and guidance for forming positive habits. Survey data showed the value of clarity, expectations and feedback for motivation.

Finally, the model incorporates individual skills and team collaboration as dual pathways to performance. Survey results indicated the complementary value of intrinsic personal development and socially motivating team environments.

5. DISCUSSION

This study revealed important insights into the complex factors shaping organizational habits and performance, ultimately pointing to an integrative model for optimization.

The survey results indicated limitations in current habit frameworks, with just 31% feeling models like Growth Mindset capture individual complexity and predict long-term impacts (Table 1); this highlights gaps accounting for nuanced neurological dynamics. Analysis of motivators showed financial rewards, growth opportunities, and recognition as the top drivers (Table 2). However, on-the-job training was also rated highly (4.09), suggesting intrinsic development can strongly influence habits and skills.

Additionally, the data revealed the critical job elements that are valued, including promotion and growth (4.21 mean) and staff welfare resources (4.10). Clear expectations (4.31) and teamwork (4.11) were viewed as critical conditions enabling motivation (Table 3).

Interviews pointed to organizational culture alignment and inherent needs as overlooked in models. As one leader stated, “These elements are critical but not sufficiently incorporated into habit framework designs.”

Ultimately, the results indicated the Motivation-Performance Model (Figure 4), encompassing empowerment, open communication and flexibility to fulfil needs and sustain habits. The model incorporates individual skills and team collaboration as pathways to outcomes.

This integrated framework draws on data-supported elements to optimize habits and performance. The model offers leaders an actionable approach grounded in research findings.

The study makes key contributions around habit model limitations, the relative effectiveness of intrinsic versus extrinsic motivators, and the multidimensional factors shaping collective habits. Further research can validate and extend the model across organizational contexts.

6. CONCLUSION

This study presented an integrative model linking psychological needs, motivational systems, and contextual supports to optimize collective habits and workplace productivity.

The results empirically confirmed limitations in existing habit frameworks, with only 31% of respondents agreeing that models reliably predict long-term performance impacts; this highlights the need to capture better complex neurological factors influencing habits over time. The relative ineffectiveness of common extrinsic motivators was also revealed, as on-the-job training was rated very highly for skill development; this points to the significant role of intrinsic motivational factors.

Additionally, the study emphasized the multidimensional inputs shaping group habits and effectiveness. Key findings highlighted the value of financial rewards, growth opportunities, clear expectations, empowerment, open communication, and flexibility in sustaining engagement. Individual skills and team collaboration provide complementary pathways to outcomes.

Ultimately, the study put forth a Motivation-Performance Model encompassing core elements supported by the data. This actionable framework offers leaders a roadmap to optimize habits leveraging contextual and motivational factors grounded in research. Diagnostic and enhancement strategies based on the model provide a methodology for leveraging habits as organizational assets.

However, study limitations, including the small localized sample, point to areas for further research. Additional factors could be incorporated and tested using longitudinal data across organizational contexts. The proposed model also requires validation through interventions assessing the impact

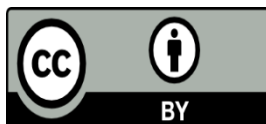
of implementing its components.

The findings make substantial empirical contributions to the neurological habits affecting organizational success. The research culminated in an actionable framework for leaders to cultivate motivated, high-performing workforces through evidence-based habit transformation strategies; this provides a foundation for further study and practical applications aimed at competitive advantage through the science of habits.

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