

## Reward for Wrongdoing: Changing Motivation Tactics to Influence Human Behaviour

Emmanuel Opong Peprah\*

Capital University of Economics and Business, Beijing, China

\*Corresponding author: Emmanuel Opong Peprah, Capital University of Economics and Business, Beijing, China, Tel: + 8618513549030; E-mail: opek3@yahoo.com

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### Abstract

There has always been a cordial relationship between human beings and nature. Whereas humans' treat nature with respect and approached the earth with responsible behavior, the earth reciprocated the gesture with the abundant provision of all human needs. However, this relationship has been marred mainly because of human activities. The level of irresponsibility in terms of pollutants and blatant disregard for common precautionary measures in the handling of the gifts nature has given human beings has led to a host of catastrophes the inhabitants of the earth must endure. Although there has been several campaigns and advocacies all over the world to guide human behavior to stop polluting the environment, these pleas seem to have fallen on deaf ears. Hence the time has come to implement some radical educational campaigns to guide people to respond responsibly to end or lessen the degradation of the earth. This paper by the use of the Cognitive Evaluation Theory proposes that wrongdoing should be extrinsically awarded with the plan to gradually take away the award remuneration which will lead to the removal of former intrinsic motivation to do the wrong things and eventually win the war on man-made pollution of this planet.

**Keywords:** Environment; Reward; Intrinsic; Extrinsic; Motivation

### Introduction

#### The relationship between humans and nature

Humans have depended on nature for all their needs. Therefore there had been a deep connection between humans and nature since human existence. In contemporary times however, due to industrial influence and other human activities, this connection between human and nature has been weakened [1]. It therefore could rightly be deduced that early human beings were a part of nature. No one would reject the fact that humans have been completely dependent on nature throughout the history of this planet. Humans actually have a fundamental physical, emotional, and intellectual dependence on nature [2]. Hence the relationship between humans and nature in the beginning was very good.

It can be said that human beings have a deep connection to nature, and although this connection has been weakened by humans' gradual dependence on industry, humans' physical and psychological essential needs from nature persist. Nature has been the source of psychological well-being and physical health for human beings from the beginning of their existence. Humans also depend on the natural environment for their basic needs such as food, shelter, and clothing. Some researchers believe that there is a state of human self, which will only be awakened through humans' connection to the natural environment. Hence the natural setting in our planet have a unique effect on human beings.

Subsequently, the aim of this study is to propose a radical solution that will help to bridge the gap that has been created between humans and nature. Hence this paper's applied methodology is basically to find and suggest a suitable solution which if implemented, will change the bad and pollution-causing attitude of people. Research in this area of

study have primarily being fundamental and thereby explore components of pollution, the effects of pollution to the environment and predictions of the environment in future if pollution of any kind is not halted. This paper is therefore different in the sense of moving a step further to propose a feasible solution to curb any form of pollution. This paper by exploring the Cognitive Evaluation theory will arrive at its suggested solution to explain how extrinsic motivation (easier to control) can take away intrinsic motivation (difficult to control) to pollute ones surroundings. Consequently, this study contributes to literature by demonstrating how theories from other discipline can be used to find solution to problems in other disciplines: this paper uses a theory in psychology to solve a problem in environmental science.

#### Human and nature on separate path

The relationship between human beings and nature became sourer mainly after the industrial revolution. After the industrial revolution, everything surrounding human beings started to become human-made; buildings, railways, roads, cars, and others. This phenomenon made humans veer off the road to nature completely. Basically postmodernity is gradually alienating the natural environment from human dwellings [3]. The relationship of man and the environment is bi-directional. That is, human beings are affected by the environment and they also affect the environment. Therefore human activities affect the distribution, quantity, and chemical quality of a lot of natural resources.

Pollution of the environment is a major challenge being faced by every country. Hence natural resources are depleting rapidly, which will surely create scarcity problem for the next generation. Also, environmental problems are becoming complicated due to excessive use of resources as every country is trying to increase economic growth to improve the living standard of its people. Today, developed

countries are using excessive resources to produce surplus goods for exports while poor countries are exploiting their existing resources to feed their growing population and end poverty level. This race of resources exploitation is creating a dangerous situation all over the world and has made the lives of people and animals vulnerable.

Biophysical research has established that since the end of the 18th century, especially since 1950, terrestrial and marine ecosystems have suffered profound transformations. Atmospheric changes have been thoroughly documented as well. The conversion of practically unaltered ecosystems and the use of new production technologies account for most of the transformation observed in terrestrial ecosystems. In marine environments, excessive fishing is pointed out as a direct driver of recent transformation, while freshwater ecosystems have been profoundly affected by changing water regimes and pollution. Nitrogen and phosphorus application directly related to human activities have generated clear environmental imbalances. In addition, the ongoing climate change has been decisively linked to greenhouse gas emissions.

### **Effects of Inappropriate Human Activities on the Environment and Adverse Consequences**

Due to human activities, there has been a tremendous change in the natural seasons as well as the ecosystems, pushing all natural order and occurrences to the extremes. These natural changes are having direct adverse effect on human beings in various forms in terms of psychological, environmental and even health wise. For example, it has been observed that people are becoming more irritable and aggressive during hot and sunny weather seasons due to the sun's direct ultraviolet radiation rays which are not being absorbed anymore due to their wiping out as a result of human activities. This phenomenon by extension is what is causing the increase in "road rage" cases during the summer months.

### **Efforts to restore the broken relationship between humans and the planet**

Since the discovery of man's activities that lead to the degradation of this planet, leading to the horrible consequences being faced now, several conferences as well as organizations have been working around the clock to come out with solutions to sever this situation. The first worldwide meeting of heads of state in response to the concerns for the environment took place at the Earth Summit, formally known as the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. This conference reflected worldwide concern about the quality of our environment. International Environment Education Programme is the outcome of the 1992 conference and since then efforts are being made globally to educate people at all levels of society about the environmental concerns and consequences of our actions. The environment in which we live and work affects our thoughts, feelings, and behaviours.

### **The Proper Things to be done**

Nature has gifted humans on this planet with abundant resource which must be used judiciously. Humans have to learn to judiciously use and conserve all the gifts that nature has given them such as air, water, food, fuel, etc. Disposal of waste materials produced, ranging from poisonous and harmful sewage to garbage, need special attention. People must be ready and able to conserve water by harvesting rain water for instance to augment water supply. Also, the quality of air has

been adversely affected by automobile and industrial emission. Large quantities of emissions from such sources have increased the presence of harmful and toxic gases in the breathable air like carbon monoxide, nitrogen dioxide, and Sulphur dioxide. Therefore innovative directions such as the usage of electric vehicles should be encouraged to clear the air of toxic substances as well as destroying helpful elements in the atmosphere. On waste disposal, wise and innovative ways should be encouraged and devised instead of flushing them into water bodies untreated.

## **Proposal to Addressing Issue**

### **The backing theory: Cognitive evaluation theory**

This theory proposes that the introduction of extrinsic rewards for work that was previously intrinsically rewarding tends to decrease overall motivation. Cognitive evaluation theory explains the effects of extrinsic motivators on intrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation involves people doing an activity because they find it interesting and derive spontaneous satisfaction from the activity itself. Extrinsic motivation, in contrast, requires an instrumentality between the activity and some separable consequences such as tangible or verbal rewards, so satisfaction comes not from the activity itself but rather from the extrinsic consequences to which the activity leads.

Deci and Ryan's Cognitive Evaluation Theory (CET) specifically addresses the social and environmental factors that facilitate versus undermine intrinsic motivation and point to three significant psychological needs that must be present in the individual in order to foster self-motivation. These needs are competence, autonomy, and relatedness. According to [4], a sense of competence comes from success experiences and overall positive feelings about an activity. Human beings by nature are driven by a need for competence. Humans experiment with and manipulate objects around them, and the joy they feel when they figure it all out is demonstrative of intrinsic satisfaction. Humans also constantly test their knowledge by embracing concepts they have already mastered with new stimuli, creating personal challenges for themselves [4,5]. A sense of competence and the ability to take on optimal challenges all foster the development of intrinsic motivation [6]. Conversely, any negative intrusion toward this process, whether it be in the form of criticism or control, may undermine feelings of intrinsic motivation.

Autonomy on the other hand dictates that in order for intrinsic motivation to flourish, a sense of competence must also be accompanied by a sense of autonomy [4]. When an individual is given a sense of choice, or an opportunity for self-direction, feelings of intrinsic satisfaction are enhanced. However, when a reward is offered as an incentive, learning and autonomy decrease, as do feelings of self-motivation [6,7]. This simply depicts that human behavior can be controlled with the right motivation psychologically. In spite of the support autonomy gives, relatedness goes hand in hand with autonomy, as both influence cognitive and affective outcomes [8]. A number of studies have confirmed that teachers or superiors who are more involved with their students or those they are directing are highly motivated and self-directed [9-11]. This notion invariably signifies the importance of policy makers' involvement in programs which are geared towards influencing people to behave in a certain way.

### Backing story: Proving how CET can work

A story is told about an old man who lived in a village somewhere in China. He loved to take naps in the afternoon. However, these naps became impossible because some of the village kids decided to move their football playing field to the old man's piece of land directly in front of his house. The constant noise coming off their feet and hitting the wall as well as the shouts for unfair tackling and the shout for goal, kept the old man up from enjoying his nap. He will therefore come out and drive the kids away. But as soon as he went back to his room, the kids will be back again and the cycle continues. He even changed his demeanour from speaking nicely to rebuking the kids but the kids kept on coming and even increased their number. Hence the more he shouted, the tougher the kids became to resisting him.

Then he thought of a plan and decided to change his tactics. The next day, as usual, the kids came to their 'field' in front of the old man's house just when it was about to hit noon and starting playing their football, intentionally even raising their voices the more to probably anger the old man the more. Surprising to them, the old man came out with a smile on his face, took a seat by his door and watched them play, occasionally cheering the goal scorers. When the kids were done playing their strength out, he gathered them, gave them candies and gave them money (2RMB) each, and promised to always give them money whenever they come to play. The kids as expected kept on coming day after day and took their cash reward. Then one afternoon, instead of 2RMB, they were given 1.50RMB. The old man explained to them that he did not have enough money to afford 2RMB each this time around. The kids murmured, but took the money. When they were given the same 1.50RMB the next day, the enthusiasm they came to play with went down. After their workout, the old man reduced the monies to 1RMB and explained to them he did not have enough to afford 1.50RMB each. They grudgingly took their monies and went home.

The next day the old man realized one of the kids did not show up to play football, apparently because he was angry the old man has reduced their 'allowance'. The old man after that day too further reduced their cash reward to 0.80RMB. The kids snapped the coins from the old man's hand without even expressing their appreciation. As expected the number reduced the next day. Their monies after the next day was again reduced to 0.50RMB at which point some of them left out of anger without even taking the money and assuring the old man they will not come back until their original amount has been restored. Eventually when their monies were reduced to 0.10RMB, they all stopped coming.

### The point of background theory and story

There has been numerous campaigns of how some human activity and bad behavior is destroying this planet, all over the world by various governments and concern groups, spending millions of dollars on such pleas and programs. However, these campaign pleas seem to have fallen on deaf ears. This could partly be because of our greed, lack of knowledge, dishonesty, not caring for others and the like, which will lead people to engage in all sort of unethical and illegal conducts. It is a firm belief of the researcher of this paper as demonstrated, that introducing extrinsic motivators to motivate people into doing the wrong things that is plaguing our planet and taking the extrinsic motivators away gradually will also take away the intrinsic motivation people have.

### Conclusion

Throughout human history, people have been threatened by floods, earthquakes, and other natural disasters. In spite of enormous scientific development, humans on this planet have not been able to control the effect of natural calamities and have not been able to control natural disasters either. In modern times, technological innovations and advances have brought about new potential man-made threats on the environment. Such man-made activities in the form of pollutants and others threatening the environmental are numerous. Although lots of efforts are been made by world and country leaders to dissuade people from engaging in irresponsible behaviors which are harmful to nature, it seems not to be working. Hence the use of Cognitive Evaluation Theory to propose new radical educational contents to address this issue.

Within the framework of Cognitive Evaluation Theory (CET), rewards carry the most risk of undermining intrinsic motivation. When an individual is given a reward for something they may have done anyway, that reward can have detrimental effects on the quality and creativity associated with the individual's performance, and on the individual's subsequent motivation to perform the activity once the extrinsic reward has been received. Rewards that are deemed controlling can undermine intrinsic motivation. Bottom line is, extrinsically rewarding people (example cash price) for doing the wrong thing and gradually taking away the reward, will take away the intrinsic motivation to do the wrong thing.

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