

Systematic Literature Review: The Importance of Work Motivation Need for Achievement to Performance

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Abstract: *The objective of this investigation is to conduct a comprehensive review and synthesis of empirical research regarding the significance of work motivation, specifically the need for achievement, in shaping employee performance in organizational settings. A systematic literature review (SLR) was conducted following the PRISMA guidelines by analyzing peer-reviewed journal articles published between 2020 and 2025 and indexed in Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar. Articles were evaluated according to predetermined inclusion criteria that prioritized employee performance, motivation, and achievement. The review provides robust and consistent empirical evidence that the need for achievement has a positive and substantial impact on employee performance. In comparison to employees with lower achievement motivation, those with high achievement motivation are more likely to establish challenging objectives, exhibit a greater level of task commitment, and produce superior work results. The results reaffirm the ongoing relevance of achievement motivation theory in elucidating performance disparities across a variety of organizational settings and sectors. This study offers a focused contribution by consolidating fragmented findings into a coherent framework and providing an up-to-date synthesis of empirical evidence on the need for achievement and employee performance. It underscores the critical role of achievement-oriented motivation as a primary internal driver of performance and identifies directions for future research, particularly in examining contextual and individual-level moderators.*

Keywords: *Need for achievement, Employee performance, Systematic Literature Review, Motivation. MSDM*

Abstraksi : *Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk melakukan tinjauan dan sintesis komprehensif terhadap penelitian empiris mengenai signifikansi motivasi kerja, khususnya kebutuhan akan pencapaian, dalam membentuk kinerja karyawan di berbagai organisasi. Tinjauan literatur sistematis (SLR) dilakukan mengikuti pedoman PRISMA dengan menganalisis artikel jurnal yang telah ditinjau oleh rekan sejawat yang diterbitkan antara tahun 2020 dan 2025 dan diindeks di Scopus, Web of Science, dan Google Scholar. Artikel dievaluasi berdasarkan kriteria inklusi yang telah ditentukan sebelumnya yang memprioritaskan kinerja, motivasi, dan pencapaian karyawan. Tinjauan ini memberikan bukti empiris yang kuat dan konsisten bahwa kebutuhan akan pencapaian memiliki dampak positif dan substansial terhadap kinerja karyawan. Dibandingkan dengan karyawan dengan motivasi pencapaian yang lebih rendah, mereka yang memiliki motivasi pencapaian tinggi lebih cenderung menetapkan tujuan yang menantang, menunjukkan tingkat komitmen tugas yang lebih tinggi, dan menghasilkan hasil kerja yang unggul. Hasil penelitian menegaskan kembali relevansi teori motivasi pencapaian yang berkelanjutan dalam menjelaskan perbedaan kinerja di berbagai lingkungan dan sektor*

organisasi. Studi ini menawarkan kontribusi terfokus dengan mengkonsolidasikan temuan-temuan yang terfragmentasi menjadi kerangka kerja yang koheren dan memberikan sintesis terkini dari bukti empiris tentang kebutuhan akan pencapaian dan kinerja karyawan. Studi ini menggarisbawahi peran penting motivasi berorientasi pencapaian sebagai pendorong internal utama kinerja dan mengidentifikasi arah untuk penelitian masa depan, khususnya dalam meneliti moderator kontekstual dan tingkat individu.

Kata Kunci: *Kebutuhan akan pencapaian, kinerja karyawan, Tinjauan Pustaka Sistematis, Motivasi, MSDM*

INTRODUCTION

Employee performance is a key factor that determines the success of an organization in achieving its goals. Various classical and contemporary theories highlight the importance of work motivation as a key driver of employee behavior and achievement. McClelland's theory of needs states that there are three basic motives that drive individual behavior, namely the need to achieve, the need for affiliation, and the need for power. The need for achievement in particular encourages individuals to set challenging targets and strive to achieve high achievements. Employees with high achievement need tend to enjoy accomplishing difficult tasks and show better performance in their jobs. In addition, the theory of self-determination developed by Deci and Ryan emphasizes that the fulfillment of basic psychological needs – such as autonomy, competence, and connectedness – will increase the intrinsic motivation of employees. Strong intrinsic motivation makes employees more excited and committed, thus contributing positively to their performance. In line with this view, Vroom's theory of expectation explains that work motivation is influenced by an individual's expectation that the effort put in will result in good performance and provide the desired rewards. (Davis & McClelland, 1962) (McClelland, 1961) (So and Ryan, 2000) (Vroom, 1995) .

LITERATURE

Work motivation factors have been empirically proven to have a significant effect on employee performance. Many studies have found that high motivation is positively correlated with improved performance. Work motivation serves as a driver for employees to achieve job targets and exceed minimum performance standards. Motivated employees tend to show better initiative, productivity, and work quality, which improves their performance. For example, research by shows that intrinsic rewards that increase employee motivation have a positive impact on their task performance. Similar findings were made in the professional context in Pakistan, where intrinsic and extrinsic motivation affect both task performance and employee contextuality. In other words, when employees' needs and desires are met through the right motivation, they are more motivated to work optimally and produce superior performance. Supportive work environment, fair reward systems, and self-development opportunities can further increase motivation and ultimately overall employee performance. (Yousaf et al., 2015) Qaiser Danish et al., (2015) Yousaf et al., (2015)

In addition to work motivation in general, the need for achievement as one of the motivational dimensions also plays an important role in encouraging high performance. Individuals with strong achievement needs usually set high

standards of achievement and are constantly striving to improve their work results. Theoretically, it has been asserted that the need for achievement drives the urge to do things better and achieve success in important tasks. Employees with high-achieving needs are not easily satisfied with average achievements; Instead, they are motivated by feedback and the achievement of challenging targets. Contemporary research supports this. Recent studies show that the high achievement requirement in employees is positively related to their job performance. For example, it was found that the compatibility between the needs of achievement owned by leaders and subordinates had a positive effect on the performance of subordinates. This means that when an employee has a push to achieve that is in line with his or her environmental expectations, he or she will be better able to demonstrate optimal performance. The need for achievement encourages the emergence of proactive behaviors in achieving work goals, such as initiatives to solve problems, work more diligently, and look for innovative ways to improve results. Thus, a high need for achievement can be seen as an internal driving force that makes employees strive to exceed the set performance targets. (McClelland, 1961) Cai et al., (2021)

Through the review above, it can be understood that work motivation, the need to achieve, and are complementary psychological factors in influencing employee performance. Work motivation, especially intrinsic motivation that is fostered through the fulfillment of basic psychological needs, provides energy and direction for employees' efforts High achievement needs ensure that the energy is focused on achieving superior work outcomes. Meanwhile, resilience ensures employees are able to maintain and recover

those high levels of performance when faced with pressure or change. The combination of these three factors results in motivated, achievement-oriented, and resilient employees, which in turn contributes greatly to the achievement of organizational performance. In other words, to improve the performance of human resources, companies need to pay attention to motivation-boosting strategies (e.g. through rewards, development opportunities, and a supportive work climate), recruit and develop individuals with a high-achieving drive, and train employee resilience skills. Organizational support in these three aspects will create employees who not only work hard to achieve targets but are also able to survive and continue to excel in various challenging work situations. This integrated effort is expected to optimize employee performance on an ongoing basis and drive organizational success in the long run. (Deci & Ryan, 1985) (McClelland, 1961) (Kašpárková et al., 2018)

Based on the above background, a systematic review is needed to summarize the latest research findings regarding the role of need for achievement motivation in improving employee performance. The research questions to be answered through this SLR include:

- Q1 : What are the factors that shape or influence the work motivation of need for achievement in employees?**
- Q2 : To what extent does achievement motivation affect performance based on empirical evidence for the 2020–2025 period?**

The results of this review are expected to provide a comprehensive understanding of the importance of achievement motivation, as well as recommendations for practitioners

to manage these aspects in order to improve the performance of human resources in organizations.

METHOD

This study uses the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach to examine the relationship between work motivation, need for achievement and performance. SLR was chosen because it allows the synthesis of the results of previous research systematically and objectively (Snyder, 2019). The review process follows the guidelines of PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) to ensure transparency and completeness. (Page et al., 2021) Literature research is carried out systematically through the Scopus database as the primary source, given its extensive coverage of reputable international publications. The search process uses a combination of the keywords "need for achievement" and "performance" associated with the Boolean operator "AND" to ensure that each article found contains both concepts simultaneously. In addition, several adjustments to the search string were made to obtain more comprehensive results, including the use of quotation marks for precise phrase matching and the application of additional filters. The search focused on full-text peer-reviewed journal articles published in the 2015–2025 range. This approach is in line with previous research practices, such as, which recommends the use of Boolean operators and filters (peer-review, full text, English, and year restrictions) to improve the precision of search results. Amadi and al ,(2025)

The search strategy is adopted strictly following the PRISMA principles, including recording the date of the last search,

complete documentation of the terms used, and storing the initial results before the next screening process. The recording effort aims to ensure transparency and reproducibility, as recommended in the PRISMA guidelines. In addition, only journal articles that meet the eligibility criteria are included, so that the quality of data sources is guaranteed and relevance to the theme of the need for achievement and performance relationship is maintained. (Moher and al, 2009)

Kriteria Kelayakan (Eligibility Criteria) The inclusion and exclusion criteria are set *a priori* to ensure that the literature selection process takes place systematically, consistently, and free from researcher bias. Inclusion criteria include: (1) *full-text peer-reviewed* scientific journal articles to guarantee scientific quality and allow for comprehensive analysis; (2) articles in English to ensure consistency of terminology and uniformity of the interpretation process; (3) publications in the period 2015–2025 to capture the latest developments regarding the relationship between need for achievement and performance; and (4) studies that explicitly examine or present empirical findings related to the two constructs. Thus, only articles that meet these four criteria are considered worthy of analysis.

Exclusion criteria are applied to ensure that only relevant sources and methodological standards are included. The literature issued includes: (1) non-journal documents such as conference proceedings, book chapters, technical reports, and theses/dissertations that do not go through a strict *peer-review* mechanism; (2) publication beyond the 2015–2025 deadline; and (3) articles that do not discuss the two core concepts, namely the need for achievement and performance, both theoretically and empirically. For comparison, Amadi et al. (2025) applied a

similar selection criterion, namely focusing on English-language publications, limited to *peer-reviewed* articles, and being within a certain period to maintain data uniformity. Adopting this approach, this study strictly applied a screening process for language, publication type, text completeness, and topic relevance, so that non-journal, non-peer-review, or non-English articles were excluded from the analysis. This approach ensures that only valid, credible, and relevant literature is used as the basis for SLR findings.

Study Selection (Selection Process)

The study selection process follows the PRISMA workflow which consists of four main stages: identification, screening, *eligibility*, and inclusion. Each stage is carried out systematically to ensure that only articles that are relevant, qualified, and meet the methodological criteria are included in the final analysis. This flow is descriptively descriptive in the PRISMA diagram which contains the number of publications at each stage along with the reasons for exclusion.

At the identification stage, all initial search results from the Scopus database are collected without initial filtering. Each entry is recorded to ensure transparency and repeatability of the research process. The duplicate is then removed to avoid double calculation. The screening stage is carried out against the titles and abstracts of the articles that remain after deduplication. Two researchers performed this process independently to reduce the potential for subjective bias. Irrelevant articles—such as studies that do not address the need for achievement or performance—are excluded at this stage. Disagreements between raters are resolved through discussion or involve a third rater to reach a consensus, as recommended in previous SLR studies. (Amadi and al, 2025)

Furthermore, at the eligibility assessment stage, articles that pass the screening are analyzed in more depth through reading the full text. Evaluation is carried out to ensure compliance with all inclusion criteria, such as publication period, language, *peer-review status*, and the existence of both research concepts. Articles that do not meet the criteria. e.g., non-journal documents, conference proceedings, articles without full text, or studies that do not address the relationship between need for achievement and performance—are excluded, and any reasons for exclusion are systematically recorded. This approach is aligned with the full evaluation practices used.

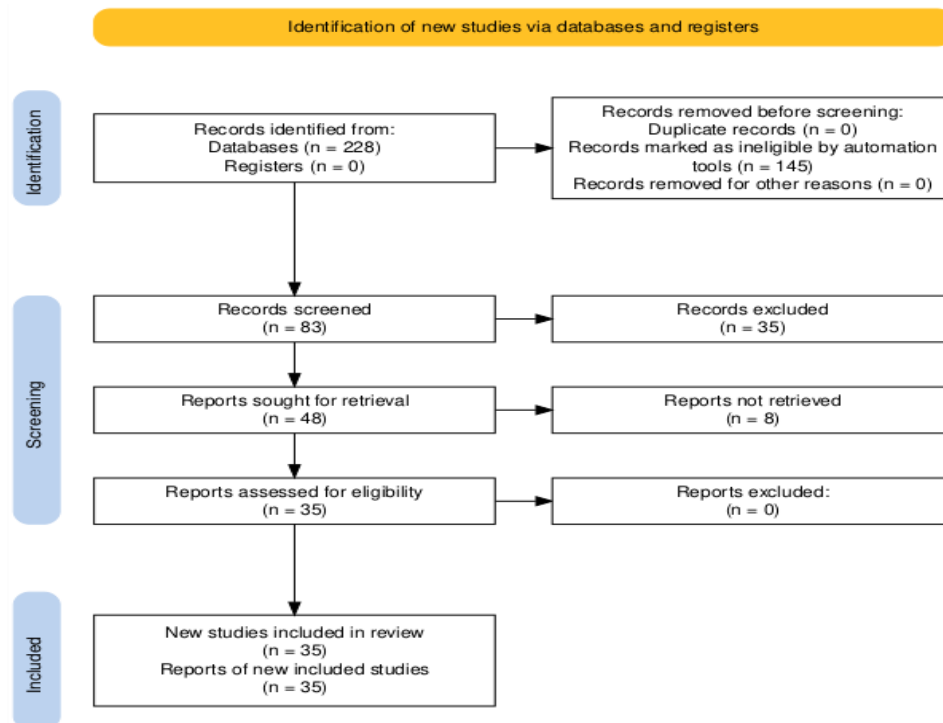
The last stage is inclusion, which is to include all articles that are declared to meet the eligibility criteria in the final synthesis. The number of studies that went into this stage and their basic characteristics were then recorded as part of the PRISMA documentation. Overall, this selection process illustrates the application of the PRISMA methodology standards: starting from the identification of the initial publication, filtering by title and abstract, full evaluation of the full text, to the determination of the final inclusion to be analyzed in the SLR.

A total of 228 articles were identified in the search for the keywords need for achievement and performance. Articles were screened based on the inclusion criteria for publications outside the range of 2015–2025 as many as 145 articles, leaving 83 articles published in journals. Then, we excluded 35 articles only from the 35 fields of business, management and accounting, so that 48 articles were included in the criteria. Then it is filtered again based on non-types of empirical research articles as many as 8 so that articles that meet the criteria of 35 articles in Figure 1 present a PRISMA

Flowchart from the article identification process. After identifying an article to include in the review, we code the article. For quantitative articles, we coded the research design (e.g., cross-sectional or longitudinal, data from a single source or multiple sources), the location of the study, the sample population, the measures of willingness to work used, the main

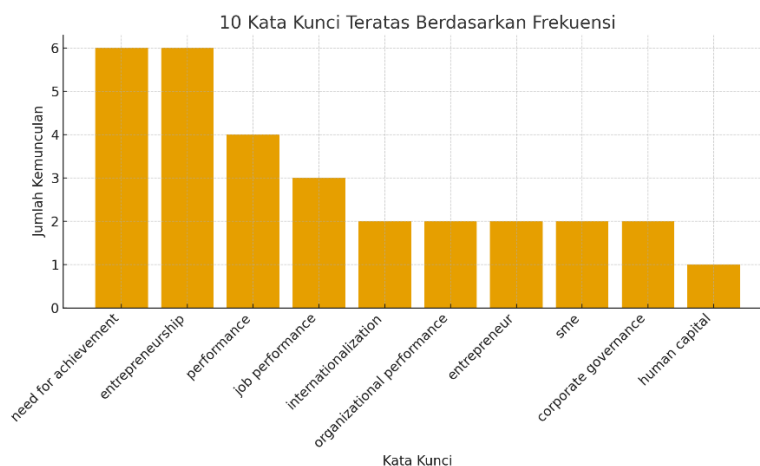
theoretical perspectives adopted, the antecedents and outcomes of the willingness to work, the variables moderated or mediated by the willingness to work, and the variables that moderated the relationship between willingness to work and other variables. For qualitative studies, we code the research design and the main themes identified in the research.

Diagram 1



RESULT and DISCUSSION

Diagram 2



Result

Analysis of the ten most frequent keywords shows that the research themes in this domain are dominated by issues related to *the need for achievement* and *entrepreneurship*, each appearing six times. The dominance of these two keywords indicates that the drive for achievement and entrepreneurial dynamics is still the center of attention of researchers in the study of management and organizational behavior. McClelland's classical theory asserts that individuals with *a high need for achievement* have a strong motivation to achieve certain standards of success, so this concept is often positioned as a primary predictor of innovative behavior and performance achievement. In line with that, contemporary entrepreneurship research shows that *entrepreneurship* plays a significant role in creating value and building an organization's competitive advantage (Rauch & Frese, 2007).

Medium-frequency keywords such as *performance* (4 times) and *job performance*

(3 times) emphasized that most studies sought to examine the relationship between psychological factors, business actors' characteristics, and organizational dynamics on performance achievements. Meanwhile, keywords such as *internationalization*, *organizational performance*, *entrepreneur*, *SME*, and *corporate governance* (2 times each) show that the direction of research is starting to move into a wider realm, especially related to the context of global competition, good business governance, and the characteristics of small and medium-sized companies. Other variations of keywords such as *human capital*, *innovation capabilities*, and *marketing performance* that appear once show supporting issues that, although important, have not yet become the dominant focus in literature. Overall, this pattern indicates that research is still focusing on the relationship between achievement motivation, entrepreneurship, and performance, while companion themes evolve gradually as the complexity of modern organizational dynamics increases. (Wiklund and al., 2011)

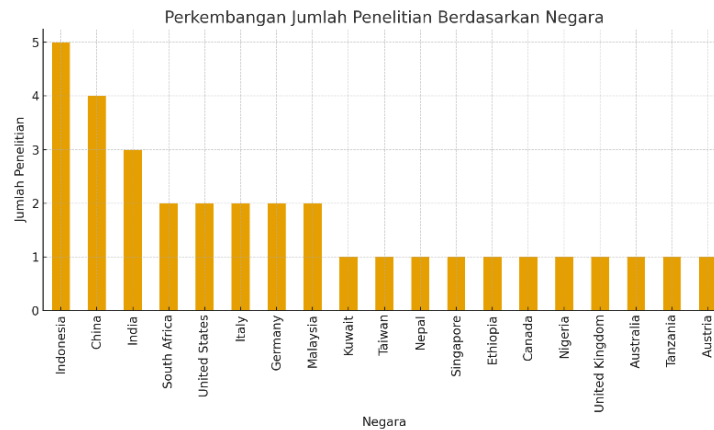
Diagram 3



Analysis of the distribution of publications by year shows that there is a pattern of research development that fluctuates throughout the observation period. Bibliographic data collected from the Scopus database shows that the number of publications peaked in 2015, before gradually declining until reaching a low in 2018. The decline indicates a weakening of academic attention to the topic of study in that period, which can occur due to changes in research focus, topic saturation, or methodological limitations faced by researchers. (Boell & Kuzmanovic, 2015) After 2018, there is a consistent increase in the number of publications until 2023. This increase reflects the resurgence of scientific interest in the research issues under review, as well as showing that the topic is gaining new relevance in academic discourse. This

phenomenon is in line with the view, which states that the revival of research interest is usually marked by an increase in empirical and conceptual publications in a study domain. Kitchenham and al., (2009) Entering 2024 and 2025, the number of publications has decreased slightly, although the rate remains higher than the previous period of decline. This condition indicates that the research topic has reached a stabilization phase, where the research is still ongoing but may be diversifying into subtopics or more specialized methodological approaches. Overall, the development pattern illustrates that the theme of the reviewed research has a dynamic character with phases of decline, recovery, and stabilization that reflect the development of scientific discourse more broadly. (Snyder, 2019)

Diagram 4



The distribution of publications by country shows that Indonesia is the largest contributor to this field of study, followed by China and India. Indonesia's dominance with the highest number of publications indicates strong scientific attention to research topics

and increasing national research capacity. The significant contribution of these Asian countries is in line with global trends that show increasing academic productivity in the Asian region (Abraham and al., 2018).

Meanwhile, a number of other countries such as South Africa, the United States, Malaysia, Germany, and Italy made moderate contributions, and other countries contributed only one publication. This geographical diversity suggests that research topics have global relevance and receive attention from a wide range of academic

contexts. As noted by, internationally developed research topics are usually characterized by the wide spread of publications across countries, thus strengthening the position of the topic in the global scientific discourse. Snyder, (2019)

Tabel 1

No	Article Title	Year	Number of Citations
1	<i>The role of organizational culture in the knowledge management process</i>	2015	251
2	<i>Decision-maker characteristics and internationalization decisions</i>	2015	82
3	<i>Determinants of microenterprise performance in developing countries</i>	2015	52
4	<i>Unique self-leadership: A bifactor model approach</i>	2015	36
5	<i>Adding fuel to the fire: Need for achievement and entrepreneurial behavior</i>	2015	31
6	<i>Unlock the potential of regional innovation ecosystems</i>	2022	28
7	<i>Need for Power Predicts Career Intent in University Students</i>	2017	22
8	<i>Enjoying or refraining from risk? The impact of psychological traits on risk behavior</i>	2020	19
9	<i>High-performance work systems and burnout: the mediating role of employee engagement</i>	2022	18
10	<i>From passion to profit: unveiling the strengths of entrepreneur motivation</i>	2024	16

An analysis of the ten articles with the highest number of citations shows that scientific papers published in 2015 dominate the list with a very significant citation rate. The article titled *the role of organizational culture in the knowledge management process* occupies the highest position with 251 citations, showing a substantial influence on the development of knowledge management theory and practice. Other publications in the same year, such as *Decision-maker characteristics and internationalization decisions* (82 citations) and *Determinants of microenterprise performance in developing countries* (52 citations), also made important contributions

to the understanding of decision-making behavior and microenterprise performance. This dominance of publications more than five years old reflects the principle of *citation accumulation*, which is the tendency of articles to obtain more citations as the publication ages. (Tahamtan & Bornmann, 2019)

In addition to influential classics, some recent articles have also begun to show an increase in citations, although the number is not as large as the old publications. Articles such as *Unlock the potential of regional innovation ecosystems* (28 citations, 2022) and *High-performance work systems and burnout* (18 citations, 2022) show that

contemporary themes regarding regional innovation and employee well-being have strong relevance in cutting-edge research. Meanwhile, 2024 publications such as *from passion to profit: unveiling the strengths of entrepreneurial motivation* have also begun to collect initial citations that show potential influence in the future. This distribution pattern is in line with findings that articles

Need for Achievement and Employee Performance

All quantitative studies reviewed consistently reported a positive association between achievement, motivation and performance. Employees with a high need for achievement tend to set higher personal work standards and proactively achieve targets, so their work performance is relatively superior to colleagues with low achievement motivation. For example, the study of Athiah (2022) shows that employees who have strong achievement motivation experience statistically significant performance improvements. Similarly, Purba et al. (2023) found a unidirectional relationship: the more motivation to achieve achievement (through managerial interventions or individual factors), the significantly increased employee performance outcomes. Several other studies were conducted in Indonesia in the early 2020s (Muslim et al., 2021; Fitriano et al., 2023; Kurniasih et al., 2023, referred to in Sulistiyani et al., 2025) also support this finding that achievement motivation plays a role as a driver of performance. Practically, this makes sense because high-quality employees usually work hard and persistently to achieve

with strong theoretical context and practical relevance tend to obtain citations more quickly even though they are new to the literature. Thus, the distribution of this citation confirms the combination of classic articles that continue to be referenced and the emergence of new works that begin to shape the direction of research development. Wang & Waltman, (2016)

achievements, so that their work achievements are more optimal.

From the global literature, this concept is in line with classical theories and findings. For example, previous meta-analyses (before 2020) have linked achievement motivation to various performance indicators (productivity, work quality, innovation). These SLR results update evidence that the relationship remains relevant in the context of modern work until 2025. Interestingly, several studies have noted that employee achievement motivation can be increased through certain programs, such as achievement motivation training. Although one study (Fikri et al., 2022, in the context of government employees) found that formal training motivation for achievement does not directly increase performance if not supported by other factors, in general, the development of a challenging and appreciative work climate is believed to be able to trigger employee achievement encouragement.

In addition to direct influences, there are indications that achievement motivation also contributes indirectly through other variable pathways. For example, employees with a high need for achievement typically display better initiative and discipline, both of which are known to be positively correlated with

performance. Some studies (e.g. Darmawan, 2022) call achievement motivation related to proactive work behaviors such as involvement in taking initiative. Overall, the

Discussion

The results of this systematic review confirm several important points in the context of modern human resource management. First, the need for achievement is a key factor that drives superior performance. This is consistent with McClelland's theory of needs and the latest empirical evidence. The implication for the organization is the need to create an environment that can satisfy employees' need for achievement. For example, organizations can set challenging but measurable work goals for employees, because individuals with high nAch "have a strong need to set and accomplish challenging goals" (McClelland, 1961). Regular feedback on performance is also crucial, because this type of employee "likes to receive regular feedback on their progress" (McClelland, 1961). By meeting these characteristics, companies not only motivate high-achieving employees, but can also stimulate other employees to increase their drive to achieve through a healthy competitive culture and rewards for achievement.

Supporting and inhibiting factors related to this theme. Supporting factors, such as self-efficacy, may play a dual role. Employees who are confident in their abilities (high self-efficacy rate) tend to have greater motivation to perform and are more resilient when faced with difficult tasks. This suggests that there needs to be a synergy of development: training or a work environment that

need for achievement can be considered an internal driving factor that enables employees to achieve their best performance potential.

improves self-efficacy will strengthen motivation. On the other hand, a limiting factor that should be noted is the organization's culture that is not aligned. When the work environment does not provide meaningful challenges or does not appreciate individual achievements, employees with high levels of motivation can lose their optimal motivation. Another thing that needs to be discussed is the cultural context. Are these findings generally applicable across cultures? The majority of the empirical studies reviewed were conducted in Asian contexts (especially Indonesia, Egypt) and some from Europe. Collectivist versus individualist cultures may influence the manifestation of the need for achievement. For example, in collectivist culture, the motivation to accomplish may manifest in the form of team achievements or bringing the good name of the group, not just individual achievements.

In terms of research methodology, the studies reviewed mostly use correlational survey design. This gives a picture of the relationship but not the certainty of cause-effect. Going forward, experimental or longitudinal research is needed to look at causality: for example, will performance-enhancing motivation interventions (training, reward systems) improve performance? Alternatively, longitudinal studies can track new hires with high-achieving motivation, whether in a few years they perform better than those who are low-

motivational. Such an approach would provide stronger evidence regarding the role of achievement motivation as a predictor of performance.

Overall, this review is consistent with the literature that employee intrinsic motivation and psychological toughness are two important pillars for long-term organizational performance and success. In the midst of the demands of modern

CONCLUSION

This article has systematically reviewed the literature for the 2020–2025 period regarding the importance of need for achievement motivation for employee performance. Several key conclusions can be drawn. First, there is strong and consistent empirical evidence that high achievement motivation in employees is positively associated with better performance. Employees who are driven to achieve achievement tend to work harder, set high standards, and achieve work goals, which ultimately improves their productivity and quality of work. The integrative implication of the above findings is that the need for achievement drives optimal performance. Motivation to excel provides direction and encouragement for employees to achieve high targets.

For management practitioners, these findings emphasize the importance of employee development programs that touch on both aspects: motivating and mental strengthening. Organizations should

business, employees who are motivated to excel and mentally resilient are valuable assets. Organizations that are able to manage and develop both of these aspects simultaneously – for example through challenging work design, a culture of appreciation, mental well-being support, and adaptive training – are more likely to achieve superior performance on a sustainable basis.

encourage a challenging but supportive work culture. For example, job design that provides opportunities for employees to set personal goals, reward schemes that recognize achievements, and coaching that provides regular feedback will meet the needs of employees for achievement. At the same time, providing resources for mental health, coaching coaching, and fostering a positive team environment will improve performance. Investments in this area are believed to provide returns in the form of improved performance, innovation, and retention of talented employees.

Finally, from the academic side, further research is still needed to fill the identified gaps. Future studies may explore mediation/moderation mechanisms between achievement motivation and performance, test interventions to improve need for achievement and performance, and expand demographic and cultural contexts to make findings more general. Thus, our understanding of how to form a workforce that is at once high achiever and performance will be more comprehensive.

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