

Relationship between Job Characteristics, Organizational Culture and Job Satisfaction: A Conceptual Study

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Abstract: *The main purpose of the study is to investigate the relationship between job characteristics, organizational culture and job satisfaction of the employees working in Malaysian call centers. Call centers work to have a distinct set of stressors including lower levels of job control or autonomy, limited task variety, and higher levels of job demand and uncertainty. A review of extant literature on job characteristics, organizational culture and job satisfaction suggests that there is lack of generalizability of research findings concerning the job application to job satisfaction. Thus there is a need to redesign the jobs of call centers employees by allowing the presence of specific job characteristics that would have a positive influence on job satisfaction. The proposed preliminary framework is both original and unique that will hopefully contribute towards the enrichment of the relevant literature.*

Keywords: Job characteristics, organizational culture, job satisfaction, call centers, Malaysia

1. Introduction

In the field of industrial and organizational psychology, research on job satisfaction has been one of the most intensive subjects. Job satisfaction among the employees of the organizations have been argued since with the appearance of Maslow's theory (1956) and since then researchers have been investigating deeply to the matter with various analytical studies. Wealth of the employees is a signal of performance of the firms (Panigrahi, Yuserrie, & Noor Azlinna, 2014). Researchers like (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Parker, Ohly, Kanfer, Chen, & Pritchard, 2008; Rubino, Luksyte, Perry, & Volpone, 2009) in the psychological areas found call center work to have a distinct set of stressors including lower levels of job control or autonomy, limited task variety, and higher levels of job demand and uncertainty. These characteristics have been linked to what could best be described as a "mental health repetitive strain", which impacts health and well-being.

In the organization like call centers, they are specialized in activities of utilizing employees receive inbound or make outbound calls telephonically. Malhotra and Mukherjee (2004) explaining the importance of call centers mentioned in their research that, call centers facilitate the spread of information and communication between firms and their potential customers via telephone. It was also reiterated by (Prabhaker, Sheehan, & Coppett, 1997) that call centers play an important role in allowing a company to build, maintain and manage customer relationship by solving their issues and resolving customer complaints quickly. Every hour of the day throughout the 365 days in the year, call centers are the central point of the companies to answer questions by the customers. As per the research performed by (Holman, Batt, & Holtgrewe, 2007) business customers and the mass market are the primary targets of the call centers. They also found that almost about 75% of the call centers served the general mass market where the volume of sales and services transactions are the highest. Whereas, about 25% of the call centers focus on providing their services to business to business customers.

Job satisfaction is regarded as a very important issue within the service industry, especially for the call center organizations due to the fact that it is connected with different aspects of their role and those which consumes most of their time-solving problems and doubts of their customers. Therefore, it is necessary that the employees feel satisfaction and harmony in carrying out their job to ensure effectiveness in delivering their duties and roles. Therefore, this research attempts to identify the job characteristics that enrich jobs in the organizational settings increasing job satisfaction and performance.

2. Literature Review

Job Characteristics

The job characteristics model, designed by Hackman and Oldham (1975), is based on the idea that the task itself is key to employee motivation. Specifically, a boring and monotonous job stifles motivation to perform well, whereas a challenging job enhances motivation. Variety, autonomy, and decision authority are three ways of adding challenge to a job. Job enrichment and job rotation are the two ways of adding variety and challenge.

Five key job characteristics like skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback are addressed by this model that impacts, meaningfulness, responsibility, and knowledge for outcomes. This characteristic also possesses influence on work outcomes like job satisfaction, job motivation, and turnover and job performance. The job characteristics model developed by Hackman and Oldham (1975), provides a conceptual framework for the enrichment of jobs. This model can be used by the managers to improve employee's job satisfaction and can increase their job performance.

Autonomy

Autonomy is defined as the degree to which a job provides enough amount of freedom, independence and discretion in their work and in determining the procedures to be used in performing the job. Autonomy also defined by Zimmer-

Gembeck and Collins (2003) as the growing ability to think, feel, and make decisions and act on their own. Autonomy leads to increase self-governance and its types like decision making, self-reliance, and conformity. Decision making is an important aspect that an employee must possess because that will make him/her to think in the abstract, weigh options and look ahead to see the possible consequences of the actions. Feeling of self-reliance is very crucial in the employee otherwise, they may be influenced by their friends or colleagues. Zangaro and Soeken (2007) investigated a meta-analysis of studies of nurse's job satisfaction using several variables like autonomy, job stress, and collaboration. The meta-analysis of 31 studies representing a total of 14,567 subjects was performed. The finding revealed that autonomy was strongly correlated with job satisfaction.

A systematic review of literature searches, a meta-analysis, and review of empirical studies on job satisfaction was performed by (Van Saane, Sluiter, Verbeek, & Frings-Dresen, 2003). Considering nine aspects of the work factors for satisfaction scale, seven instruments met the defined reliability and validity criteria and were found to be important whereas autonomy and work content were measured minimally. In the recent research investigated by (Belias, Koustelios, Sdrolias, & Aspridis, 2015) on job satisfaction and autonomy of employees in the Greek banking organizations. The result of the research confirmed that role conflict is negatively associated with job satisfaction, autonomy was found to have moderating effect between role conflict and job satisfaction.

Competence

Competence means the ability to undertake responsibilities and to perform activities on a regular basis to a recognized standard (Stanton, Salmon, Jenkins, & Walker, 2009). Competence includes high ability skills like critical thinking, teamwork, communication and permanent learning (Litchfield, Oakland, & Anderson, 2002). Successful competence dictates that the employee remains in the organization over the long period of time. Thus when looking at ways to describe skills and competencies different approaches have become popular within the past decades. The concept of the importance of skills and competencies have mainly been discussed heavily in the psychological studies and in different areas like human resource assessment and behavioral studies. The portfolio of competence uses different methods to help individuals increase their skills and abilities along with competencies. Recently in the research performed by Arifin (2014) on the relationship between competence and job satisfaction and performance of 346 teachers by means of the survey questionnaire. The data analysis using SEM method found that competence and job satisfaction significantly influence teacher's performance.

Task Identity

Task identity is defined as the degree to which an employee is wholly responsible for the completion of the task from start to finish. According to Coelho and Augusto (2010), task identity encourages the feelings that the job is meaningful and worthwhile motivating the employees at work. Furthermore, mentioned that every job required the mix of knowledge, skills, and ability for using a variety of

activities and tasks. Hoonakker, Marian, and Carayon (2004) mentioned that task identity is related to the quality of working life of the workforce. The research based on the job performance of call center employees in India performed by Das (2012) also revealed that low task identity in the employee with low variance performance is most likely to leave as compared to the high variance performance employees. A pragmatic action is required for task identity to complete the whole task, responsibility of the task completion from start to finish with appropriate results. According to due to the effect of cognitive and motivational processes, difficult goals and complex tasks are performed better.

Job Variety

Job variety is defined as the degree to which a job is performed with varied skills and talents of the employees. When a task requires a person to engage in activities that challenge his skills and abilities as meaningful by the individual. Morris and Venkatesh (2010) defined skill variety as "the extent to which a job requires to use of different talents". Job variety helps to improve job design increasing job satisfaction and motivation. Kemboi, Biwott, Chenuos, and Rutto (2013) examined variety and their effect on employee job performance based on goal setting theory and job characteristics theory. With a sample of 320 nurses, the result indicated that job variety significantly affects job performance. It was also suggested that nurses need to be provided with more training in order to enhance their skills and improve their performance.

The research performed by Morris and Venkatesh (2010) examining the relationship between job characteristics and job satisfaction based on 2794 employees in the telecommunication firms moderated by ERP system. The findings highlighted the key role that ERP implementation has well-established relationship between technology-enabled organizational situations. The findings indicated that skill variety is an interesting characteristic and high level of skills are required with no repetitive in order to enhance job satisfaction.

Job Feedback

Job feedback is defined as the degree to which the job is carried out by obtaining clear and direct information about the effectiveness of the performance. Obtaining feedback means pertaining to feedback from the job, agents, managers and others. Providing effective feedback can be a complex and intricate process and is critical to each employee's success. When executed properly, feedback can motivate, increase performance and increase workplace satisfaction. Effective and timely feedback is a critical component of a successful performance management program and should be used in conjunction with setting performance goals. If effective feedback is given to employees on their progress towards their goals, employee performance will improve. It was also accepted by Evans, Kiggundu, and House (1979) the feedback is a good predictor of the outcomes like job satisfaction and job performance. According to Hadi and Adil (2010) investigating job characteristics as predictors of job satisfaction and work motivation in bank managers through purposive sampling, it was revealed that feedback

was only the predictor for explaining the extrinsic motivation of the bank managers.

Work condition

Working condition is the key area that defines the minimal requirements of the employees in the organization. The working condition includes a wide range of areas like working hours, information and consultation of the employees, occupational health and safety at work as well as conditions for part-time, full time and temporary employees. There are many financial and non-financial factors that can be used to measure performance appraisals of an individual (Panigrahi, Zainuddin, & Azizan, 2014). Working conditions as a factor of job satisfaction include the influence of factors related to the employee, so-called subjective factors; the impact of environmental factors; and the impact of organizational factors that are primarily related to the organization of production.

The studies that have dealt with the working conditions as a factor of job satisfaction shows that employees prefer working conditions which are not dangerous and unpleasant (Robbins, 1998). They like working conditions which are similar to the conditions that they have in their homes. Furthermore, researchers have shown a link between working conditions and job satisfaction (Brill et al., 2001; Newsham et al., 2004; Finnegan and Solomon, 1981; Leather, et al., 1998, Veitch et al., 2005; Newsham et al., 2009; Kinzl et al., 2005). It is important that workers are trained how to work with the equipment because inadequate equipment handling can result in accidents or deviations in performance no matter how much equipment was proper. Training of employees should be also oriented to the proper use of protective equipment and personal protection (Buble, 2006).

Task Significance

Task significance is thought to be particularly critical in today's economy, as employees are increasingly concerned with doing work that benefits other people and contributes to society (e.g., Colby, Sippola, and Phelps, 2001; Turban and Greening, 1997) and as organizations are increasingly concerned with providing employees with these opportunities (e.g., Brickson, 2005; Thompson and Bunderson, 2003). Although task significance is assumed to increase job performance by enabling employees to experience their work as more meaningful, scholars have not yet established a clear causal link between task significance and job performance. The major meta-analyses of the job design literature show weak relationships between task significance and objective and subjective measures of job performance (Fried and Ferris, 1987; Humphrey, Nahrgang, and Morgeson, 2007).

Therefore, in order to effectively advance the course of the organisation we may safely reason that job satisfaction is of importance if salesmen are expected to contribute efforts to organisation economic prosperity. Besides, employee perception of task significance is expected to increase job performance by increasing his experience on the job as being more meaningful (Grant, 2008).

Organizational Culture

The concept of organizational culture was common in the literature related to organization and management in the 1960s and 1970s. The concept of organizational culture gained popularized after the great deal to books like "*In Search of Excellence*" by (Peter & Waterman, 1982), *Corporate Cultures* by (Deal & Kennedy, 1982) and *Theory Z* by (Ouchi, 1981) that found that organizational culture had great influence on organization in the areas of performance and management related aspects. The importance of organizational culture has been confirmed by many extensive studies like (Lund, 2003; Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2011; Quinn & Robert, 2011; Silverthorne, 2004).

In spite, of the fact that organizational culture is crucial for the performance and employee related aspects, managing these culture has been a challenging task for the managers. Due to organization's uniqueness, value, mission, goals and shared values, organizational culture had a strong association with the organization. Organizational culture also represents organization behavior through intangible and unquestionable beliefs as discussed critically by (Schein, 2010). Furthermore, (Berson, Oreg, & Dvir, 2008) confirmed organizational culture as unique characteristics of distinguishing organizations from its competitors. Previous studies have shown that organizational culture has an impact on key organizational constructs. According to MacIntosh and Doherty (2010) along with the influence of organizational culture on organizational performance, it also affects individual's attitude and behaviors.

Job Satisfaction

The concept of job satisfaction one of the topics that gained the attention of researchers, and won numerous studies, because it is one of the reasons or motives of the important outstanding job performance, and that dissatisfaction may lead as well as lower production to certain disorders or psychological problems. Job satisfaction is a subject which has been researched for more than half a century and which is still a subject of constant interest even today it is one of the important factors that maintain a high level of performance. The main reason for this interest may be due to the implications of job satisfaction for such job-related behaviors as productivity, absenteeism, employee relations, turnover (Eyupoglu & Saner, 2009), including performance and commitment (Darrat, Amyx, & Bennett, 2010).

One of the biggest introductions to the research of job satisfaction was the Hawthorne studies; these studies (1924-1933), primarily credited to Elton Mayo of the Harvard Business School, which sought to research effects of various conditions (most notably illumination) on workers' productivity. Some argue that Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory, the theory of motivation and laid the foundation for the theory of job satisfaction. This theory explains that people seek to meet the five specific needs to life-physiological needs, the needs of safety, social needs, the needs of self-esteem, and self-actualization; This model is a good basis from which researchers can develop early theories of job satisfaction (Gupta, 2009).

The model describes the relationship and influence of job characteristics and cultural characteristics on job outcomes.

The model will be empirically investigated in the Malaysian call centers context.

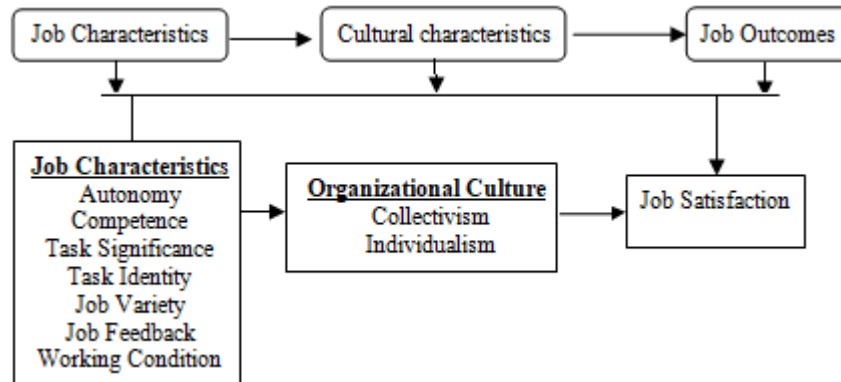


Figure 1: Theoretical Framework

Although the Job characteristic model already been used by previous researchers as a conceptual framework, this research has executed to test the job characteristics model of satisfaction in call centers employees. Finally, organizational culture also would play an important role in job satisfaction and performance as the extent management research literature has not, to date examined organizational culture and its relation to job satisfaction and job performance.

3. Conclusions

The research of job satisfaction and performance was considered to be crucial for the employee and the employer. The use of assessing job satisfaction through identifying key job characteristics and organizational culture can be a reflection of firm's functionality. The exploration of this research provides a good opportunity to develop an entire in-depth understanding of the underpinning factors contributing to the job satisfaction and performance of the employees. The findings and the knowledge gathered through quantitative aspects will be of relevant importance to the top management officials of the industry. In short, all the aforementioned studies did not investigate the job satisfaction of employees and were not extensive in exploring in-depth underpinning factors contributing to job performance and job satisfaction. Therefore, this research will bridge the gap by giving call center employees, feelings and attitudes regarding their job satisfaction through the adoption of quantitative method.

Finally, organizational culture also would play an important role in job satisfaction and performance as the extent management research literature has not, to date examined organizational culture and its relation to job satisfaction and job performance.

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