

Work Motivation in the Academe: The Case of Albanian Public Universities

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Abstract

Work redesign is becoming increasingly prominent as a strategy for attempting to improve simultaneously the motivation and the quality of the work experience of employees in nowadays organizations. Although the benefits of work redesign are widely touted in the management literature, in fact little is known about the reasons why "enriched" work sometimes leads to positive outcomes for workers and for their employing organizations. Even less is known about the relative effectiveness of various strategies for carrying out the redesign of work (Hackman, 1975). A model is proposed that specifies the conditions under which individuals will become internally motivated to perform effectively on their jobs. The model focuses on the interaction among three classes of variables: (a) the psychological states of employees that must be present for internally motivated work behavior to develop; (b) the characteristics of jobs that can create these psychological states; and (c) the attributes of individuals that determine how positively a person will respond to a complex and challenging job. The model was tested for academic staff who work on different public universities all over Albania and results support its validity. A number of special features of the model are discussed and the model is compared to other theories of job design.

Keywords: Job characteristic model, motivation potential score, internal motivation, external needs.

1. Introduction

Motivation is considered to be a soul achievement of human resources management practices as almost all the human resource practices has fundamental aim which includes job involvement and job satisfaction of an employee and acquiring high level of work motivation (Jerris, 1999 cit et Rasheed et al, 2010). Employee's motivation can only be attained by realizing him/her that his individual needs or goals are aligned with organizational goals or achievement. Organizations need to extract various internal and external motivators for its workers so that they can increase their motivation in order to get long run success. Nohria (2008, cit et Rasheed et al, 2010) revealed in a recent study that motivation is measured by multidisciplinary indicators like engagement, satisfaction, commitment, and intention to quit. According to Rainey (2001, cit et Rasheed et al, 2010) work motivation refers to the level of excitement, direction, and persistence of effort in work settings that a person tries to work hard and well. Similarly, Dessler (1980, cit et Rasheed et al, 2010) pointed out that "at the same time motivation is both one of the simplest and most complex job of management. It is simple because people are motivated by rewards. Therefore if you want to motivate someone you must have to find out what he or she wants and put that thing as a reward for him, as a result that person will be behaving in the desired way. Although money is influential factor at every stage but at the same time it is not necessary that money alone can increase motivation of every worker there are intangibles (for instance empowerment, recognition and feedback) that are primary motivators for the workers inspiration to perform effectively (Fuhrmann, 2006, cit et Rasheed et al, 2010).

Different theories of motivation like Maslow's hierarchy of need theory, Herzberg's motivation hygiene theory and Adam's Equity theory are been stated in literature. These theories provide fundamental basis of motivation that help describing the motivation of employees in a systematic way

and in understanding the contemporary theories of motivation like goal setting theory, reinforcement theory and expectancy theory etc. Maslow's (1943, cit et Rasheed et al, 2010) need-based theory of motivation is the most commonly known theory of motivation according to which there are five fundamental needs of a person i.e., physiological, security, affiliation, esteem, and self-actualization.

2. The Job Characteristics Model – A Theoretical Overview

The JCM is primarily based on an intrinsic process motivation theory, which focuses on the behavior or job itself (Leonard, Beauvais, & Scholl, 1999 cit et Debnath et al, 2007). It has the following four major components: (a) core job characteristics, (b) critical psychological states (CPS), (c) personal and work outcomes, and (d) growth-need strength (GNS).

First, any job can be described effectively in terms of five core job dimensions or characteristics. These are *skill variety*, the breadth of skills and talent used to perform a variety of activities; *task identity*, the opportunity to complete an entire or identifiable piece of work that has a beginning and an end with tangible outcomes; *task significance*, the perception of the value of one's work to others or some broader future goals; *autonomy*, the depth of work-related discretion and freedom allowed by the job; and *feedback*, the amount of direct and clear information about work performance.

Second, the presence of these job characteristics and their magnitudes are thought to trigger *three CPS* in a jobholder. The first three characteristics— skill variety, task identity, and task significance—combine to prompt the CPS of *experienced meaningfulness of work*, which is the belief regarding the importance, value, or worth of the job. The fourth characteristic, autonomy, prompts the CPS of *experienced responsibility*, which refers to the feelings of personal responsibility for the work outcomes. The fifth characteristic, feedback, contributes to the CPS of *knowledge of actual results* based on how well it provides an understanding of performance effectiveness (Debnath et al, 2007).

3. External Needs and Work Motivation

3.1 Pay

Pay refers to the amount of financial compensation that an individual receives as well as the extent to which such compensation is perceived to be equitable. Remuneration and earnings are a cognitively complex and multidimensional factor in job satisfaction. According to Luthans (1998), salaries not only assist people to attain their basic needs, but are also instrumental in satisfying the higher level needs of people. According to Boone and Kuntz (1992), offering employees fair and reasonable compensation, which relates to the input the employee offers the organisation, should be the main objective of any compensation system. Included in the category of compensation are such items as medical aid schemes, pension schemes, bonuses, paid leave and travel allowances. According to Robbins et al. (2003), employees seek pay systems that are perceived as just, unambiguous, and in line with their expectations. When pay is perceived as equitable, is commensurate with job demands, individual skill level, and community pay standards, satisfaction is likely to be the result.

3.2 Supervision

Research indicates that the quality of the supervisor-subordinate relationship will have a significant, positive influence on the employee's overall level of job motivation (Aamodt, 1999; Kinicki & Vecchio, 1994; Luthans, 1992; Moorhead & Griffen, 1992;

Robbins, 1998). Researchers (Knoll, 1987; Pfeiffer & Dunlap, 1982; Rettig, 2000) have written extensively about the importance of supervision in schools. Their research indicates that supervisory activities foster motivation, inspiration, and trust and thus help to improve teaching performance. Research indicates that principals play a vital role in the care for the personal welfare and emotional support of teachers (Bull, 2005).

3.3 Co-worker relations

There is empirical evidence that co-worker relations are an antecedent of job satisfaction (Morrison, 2004). Research (Mowday & Sutton, 1993), suggests that job satisfaction is related to employees' opportunities for interaction with others on the job. Hillebrand (1989) found that the greatest need of educators centred around interpersonal needs. He maintains that healthy relationships with colleagues and school principals increase educational concerns and goal attainment. These findings strengthen the argument that organisations should engage in the integration of employees so as to create group cohesion among employees and departments within the organisation (Lambert et al., 2001).

3.4 Working conditions

Working conditions is another factor that have a moderate impact on the employee's job satisfaction (Luthans, 1992; Moorhead & Griffen, 1992). According to Luthans (1998), if people work in a clean, friendly environment they will find it easier to come to work. If the opposite should happen, they will find it difficult to accomplish tasks. Teachers workload, changes in the education system and a lack of discipline amongst some of the learners may be some of the reasons why teachers want to exit the profession. The working environment of teachers also determines the attitude and behaviour of teachers towards their work (Bishay, 1996).

4. Research methodology

Aim of this study: This study attempts to investigate the relationship between work motivation and other external needs, in particular satisfaction with pay, working conditions, supervision and co-worker relations among public universities academic staff. After selecting the scale that would be used for this purpose, it was independently translated from English to Albanian language. According to literature, the author has created questions that measure these external needs. Then, they were synthesized into only one questionnaire by the researcher herself. To ensure the correct presentation of the Albanian questionnaire a bilingual specialist in the field of psychology revised it and corrected few terms so that the questionnaire was user friendly. The questionnaires were distributed and gathered mainly by the researcher herself. Academic staff of various public universities were personally contacted by the researcher and explained them about the nature and objectives. They were assured that their information would not be leaked out. Specific instructions regarding filling of questionnaires were written in the beginning of each questionnaire which clearly directed the respondents as how to fill the questionnaires. Maximum time of questionnaires administration was 30 minutes and minimum time limit was 20 minutes. They were thanked for their participation in the study.

4.1 Sampling

A survey research design was used in this study to investigate relations among variables. Public university academic staff were the participants of the study. The sampling method used in this research was Cluster sampling which is commonly implemented as multistage sampling. This is a complex form of cluster sampling in which two or more levels of units are embedded one in the other. The first stage consists of constructing the clusters that will be used to sample from. In the second stage, a sample of primary units is randomly selected from each cluster (rather than using all units contained in all selected clusters). In following stages, in each of those selected clusters, additional samples of units are selected, and so on. All ultimate units (individuals, for instance) selected at the last step of this procedure are then surveyed. This technique, thus, is essentially the process of taking random subsamples of preceding random samples.

Cluster sampling also has advantage in sampling institutions such as schools, universities and hospitals. It is difficult to list them into a sample survey. You need permission from the administrator and dean approval. There may be other committees that slow the recruitment process. Once a hospital, school or university has been entered it seems reasonable to get as much information as possible. Data was gathered from lectures working in public universities in Albania. The age range of the sample was 25 to 58 years ($M = 37.36$, $SD = 9.37$). The educational baseline of the sample was graduation.

4.2 Instrument:

The primary data collection instrument was the Job Diagnostic Survey (JDS), an instrument specifically designed to measure each of the variables in the job characteristics model. Hackman and Oldham [1976] developed a self report instrument to measure the five core job features of job characteristics model. The questionnaire consists of 23 items, and items were scored on 5 point Likert type scale. The 5 subscales pertaining to 5 job characteristics were scored in accordance with the standard scoring of job diagnostic survey. JDS has been found to be a reliable measure of job characteristics as the alpha coefficient reliability of the scale was reported 0.76 (Abdullah, 2004); the coefficient alpha for the job characteristics ranged from .59 to .78 (Scott, Swartzel, & Taylor, 2005). In this study JDS has been found to be with a cronbach's alpha 0.786. The second part of the instrument contains 19 questions for four variables with a cronbach's alpha 0.845. A biographical questionnaire soliciting information on respondent gender, age, tenure, civil status and education level was compiled. The data with respect to these biographical questions were subsequently graphically presented and discussed to provide an indication of the most salient findings with respect to these variables.

5. Findings and discussion

The concept of job characteristics model focuses on designing a job so that it motivates a person (Droar, 2006). Based it on job diagnostic survey, Hackman, Oldham, Janson, and Purdy (1976) developed this approach. Job characteristics are objective characteristics of jobs, particularly the degree to which jobs are designed so that they enhance the internal work motivation and the job satisfaction of job incumbents (Hackman & Oldham, 1974). The five core job features, which are task significance, task variety, task identity, autonomy and feedback, believed to positively correlate with job satisfaction and performance (Hunter, 2006). Skill variety is ostensible variety and intricacy of skills and talents required by a job to perform it (Buys, Olckers, & Schaap, 2007). Task identity requires from a worker to perform all the tasks necessary to complete the job from beginning to the end of the production process whereas the worker's feeling for his job that it is meaningful for his colleagues and organization because of its impact upon them is termed as task significance (Hackman & Oldham, 1976). When the job provides its owner the freedom and power to exercise his own authority while taking the decision is the job feature of autonomy (Buys et al., 2007). When employee gets direct and clear information about his performance on his job it is known as feedback characteristic of job (Hunter, 2006). The job characteristic model predicts that if the aforementioned job features are present in a job, the job incumbent will be more likely to have high internal work motivation, high satisfaction with the work and low absenteeism and turnover (Gomez-Mejia, Balkin, & Cardy, 2005; Matteson, 2002).

5.1 Descriptive statistics

Descriptive statistics describe the phenomena of interest (Sekaran, 2003) and is used to analyze data for classifying and summarizing numerical data. It includes the analysis of data using frequencies, dispersions of dependent and independent variables and measures of central tendency and variability and to obtain a feel for the data (Sekaran, 2003 cit et Bull, 2005). The mean and standard deviation

will primarily be used to describe the data obtained from the questionnaire. The results of the biographical questionnaire will be based on the frequencies and percentages obtained based on the sample characteristics.

For the purposes of determining whether a statistically significant relationship exists between work motivation and external needs, the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was used. It provides an index of the strength, magnitude and direction of the relationship between variables. (Sekaran, 2003 cit et Bull, 2005). The Product Moment Correlation Coefficient is, therefore, suitable for the purposes of the present study since the study attempted to describe the relationship between work motivation and external needs.

5.2 Population Description

Data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS® Version 14 for Windows). Descriptive statistics, including means and standard deviations, were used to summarize the data. Frequencies and percentages were reported for the demographic data. Means and standard deviations were computed for the job characteristics. The analysis reveals that the respondents were mostly female, age up to 25 years (6.7%), 26 – 35 years (66.7%) and 36 – 45 (26.7%). Marital status was single (6.7%), married (80%) and divorced (13.3%). Their education level was mostly master degree (80%), doctor of science (13.3%) and as. Professor (6.7%).

5.3 Level of work motivation

Based on the five point scale used, the minimum work motivation rating was 12.24 and a maximum of 113.3. The mean rating value was 55.9, with a standard deviation of SD= 19.3. It implies that overall level of work motivation in academic staff is good or at a moderate level.

5.4 Perceptions of the Job Characteristics

Based on responses, academic staff perceived the job characteristics skill variety and task autonomy to be present most in their jobs, while they perceived task identity the least. The research question is: What is the level of satisfaction with each of motivation constructs? The main constructs of internal motivation according to Oldham & Hackman were skill variety, task identity, task significance, feedback and autonomy. They are seen as independent variables which correlate with overall internal work motivation (dependent variable).

Table 1. The mean rating for the job characteristics variables

Categories of work motivation	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Dev.	Level of satisfaction
Skill Variety	2.40	4.60	3.6000	.55032	Moderate
Task Identity	3.00	4.75	3.8333	.54827	Moderate
Task Significance	2.50	4.50	3.4667	.54989	Moderate
Autonomy	2.00	4.25	3.4667	.68051	Moderate
Feedback	2.33	4.33	3.2444	.58373	Moderate

Referring to table 1, we can see that the last most satisfied factor as perceived by academic staff was “feedback” with a mean score 3.24 which reflect that they are unsatisfied with direct and clear information about the effectiveness of his or her performance.

Table 2. Pearson correlation matrix for the job characteristics

	Motivation potential score	
	Pearson correlation	Sig (2-tailed)
Task identity	.437(**)	.000
Task Significance	.555(**)	.000

Skill Variety	.591(**)	.000
Autonomy	.867(**)	.000
Feedback	.806(**)	.000

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The results indicate that there are significant correlations between task identity and work motivation ($r = 0.437$), task significance and work motivation ($r = 0.555$). The third relation is among skill variety and we also see that that strongest relation is between autonomy and work motivation ($r = 0.867$).

Table 3. Pearson correlation matrix between work motivation and external needs

	Motivation potential score	
	Pearson correlation	Sig (2-tailed)
Co-worker relations	.493(**)	.000
Supervision	.443(**)	.000
Working conditions	.324(**)	.000
Pay	.158(*)	.017

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The results indicate that there is a moderate relationship between working conditions and work motivation ($r = 0.324$). There was also a significant relationship between supervision and work motivation ($r = 0.443$). Moreover, there was a significant relationship between coworker relations and work motivation ($r = 0.493$). The weakest relation is between pay and other variable ($r = 0.158$).

6. Conclusions

Overall, academic staff perceived skill variety to be present in their jobs, meaning that they felt that their jobs require an array of different activities to carry out the work, requiring them to use a number of different skills and talents. This conclusion is consistent with Ferguson's (1992) study, which indicated that Nebraska staff perceived skill variety to be present in their jobs. They perceived task significance to be present in their jobs, meaning that their jobs have a substantial impact on the lives of other people, whether those people are in the immediate organization or the world at large. But they perceived feedback from others to be present in their jobs the least, meaning they perceived clear information about their performance from supervisors or from co-workers is not as prevalent in their jobs as other job characteristics. This conclusion is consistent with Ferguson's (1992) study.

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