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EVALUATING THE EFFECT OF CORE JOB DIMENSION ATTRIBUTES ON PERSONAL AND WORK OUTCOMES IN NIGERIA INDUSTRIES: A STUDY OF SELECTED MULTINATIONAL ORGANISATIONS IN THE SOUTH EAST

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Key Words: Core Job Dimensions, Psychological State, Work Outcome, Work Performances And Perceived Equity With Comparison Group.

Abstract

This paper presents a psychological approach to job design in evaluating the effect of core job dimensions on personal and work outcomes. The main objective of the research is to educate how the core job dimensions characteristics can be used to guide Managers in evaluating jobs and help them to predict an employee's motivation, work performance and job satisfaction. The descriptive survey research design was used to demonstrate how the variables were manipulated to generate the necessary primary data. The stratified sampling procedure was used to select representative samples from the group for study. Structured questionnaire was found necessary to answering research questions and relevant hypothesis. The job characteristics model was adopted as general framework of the theory. Generated result data was analysed with a predictive index model known as motivating potential score (MPS). The study reveals that job scores that are high on motivating potentials indicates that motivation, performance and satisfaction will be positively affected, while the likelihood of absenteeism and turnover is lessened. The paper therefore recommends that all managers should better evaluate their designed jobs with the core job dimensions attribute to better predict employee's motivation, work performance and satisfaction.

Introduction

The study centered on Job design and Re-design as a motivational factor (e.g Enriched Complex jobs), and discusses the core job dimension attributes of any job. It answers the questions: what are the key dimensions to any job, How could management use the information to better re-design enriched jobs or vertically expanded jobs. To enrich job is to increase the degrees to which the workers control the planning, execution and evaluation of their jobs. An enriched job provides an organised task as to allow workers do a complete activity, increase the employee freedom and independence, increase responsibility and provide feedback so that an individual will be able to assess and correct their own performance.

The aim of the article is to analyse the relationship between core job dimensions, critical psychological states and personal and work outcomes when moderated or adjusted by the perceived equity with comparison groups. This means that individuals with high Equity returns compared with other groups are more likely to

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experience the psychological states when their jobs are enriched than their counterpart with low equity returns in non-enriched jobs.

The aforementioned assumptions clearly indicate that core job dimension can be observed from various variables and during various time intervals. In the research, the author used one-time-only observation of the dependent and independent variables in order to predict the influence of diverse dimensional attributes on the behavioural outcomes of the employees.

The article therefore aims to establish whether core job dimension attributes (within the defined variables)influences personal behaviour and work outcomes performances of the employees (within the defined variables). Core job dimension characteristics are the Independent variables in the study and were constructed as skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy and feedback. Work performance or the personal behavioural work outcomes of the employee was asessed on the basis o five indicator variables as – High internal work motivation, High quality work performance, high satisfaction with the work and low absentecism and tumover. "Perceived Equity with comparison groups" was used as the moderating variable instead of "employee growth need strength" used by (Hackman T.R.,1977).

The few majorities of previous researchers have demonstrated the effect of employee "growth need strength" as a moderating variable in the Job Characteristic Mode(JCM) and the evidence supports the general frame work of the theory (Minner J.B,1980).

But there is considerable debate about the employee "growth need strength" as a moderating variable. The argument, is whether other moderating variables may not be as good or better than "growth need strength"?. Therefore, the authors aim in this paper is to determine the effect of "perceived Equity with comparison group" as an alterative gap filling moderating variable capable of moderating job characteristics-outcome relationship.

The author assumes with relative confidence that the use of "Perceived Equity(input outcome ratio) with comparison groups should produce results as good as the growth need strength or even demonstrate better influence on job characteristics through the critical psychological states as defined in the study.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The problem statement is to evaluate through psychological state the effect of core job dimension attributes on employee behavioural outcome performance. The key dimension to any job involves-the skill variety, task identity, tasks significance, autonomy and feedback" (Hackman J.R., 1977). The problem statement is to evaluate how management could use these informed variables to better design jobs, guide managers and help them to predict an employee motivation, work performance and job satisfaction. The feasible problem solution to the problem is to evaluate the relationship between the job dimension, the critical psychological states and work outcomes performance.

The study is important in the evaluation of enriched jobs in order to ascertain employee's motivation and satisfaction with their jobs. To ignore this study is to encourage a demoralizing and repetitive wok condition, boring and unchallenging jobs which constitute small "logs" in a big "wheel".

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The feasible research question may be assessed by giving answers to the following questions;

i. Does combined factors of skill variety, task identity, and task significance, psychologically influence you to experiencing meaningfulness of your work, thereby generating high internal motivation.
ii. Does having autonomy over your jobs, psychologically influence you to experiencing responsibility, thereby generating high quality work performance.
iii. Does having feedback on your job result that clearly state your effectiveness in your job performance influence your satisfaction and knowledge of the actual outcome of the work activities, thereby generating high satisfaction with your work, low absenteeism and turnover.

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iv. Does a perceived Equity with comparison groups as a moderating variables psychologically moderate or influence in you any degree of internal motivation, high quality work performance, and high satisfaction with the work and low absenteeism and turnover.

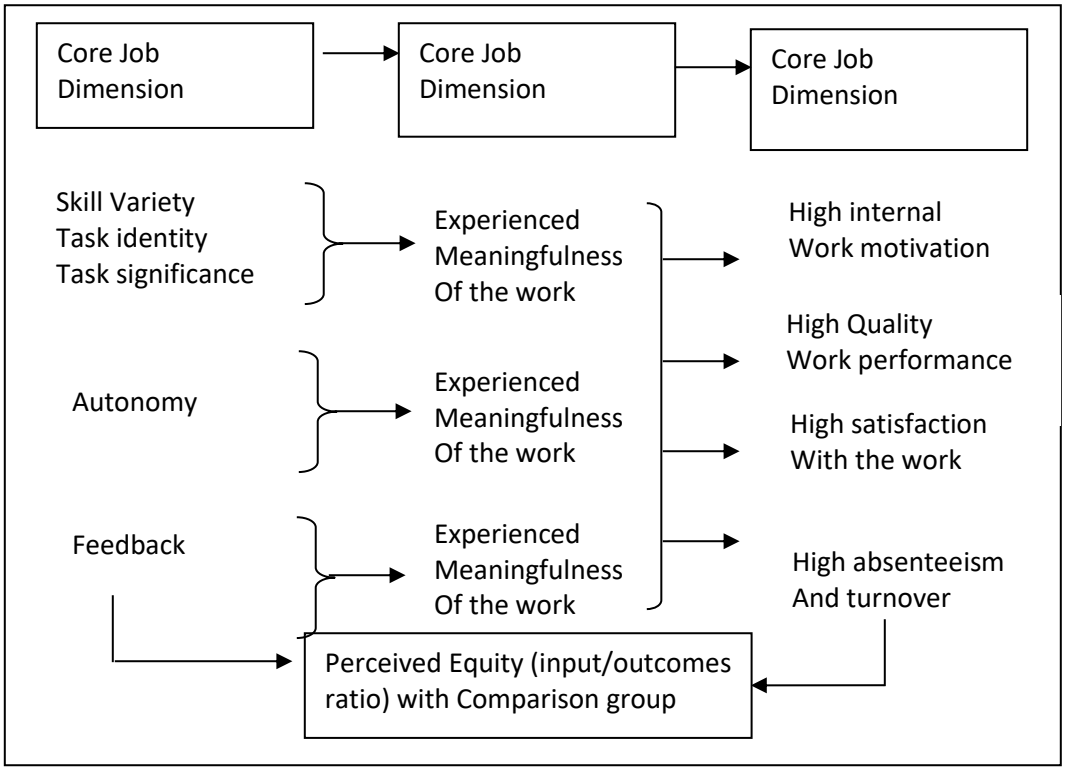
OBJECTIVES

The general purpose of this study is to evaluate through critical psychological states, the effect of core dimension characteristics influence on behavioural outcomes, or employee personal and work outcomes. In other words, the objective is to evaluate the relationship between defined variables of core dimension characteristics through critical psychologies states and personal and work outcomes.

The specific objectives of the study are;

1. To predict through critical psychological states, the effect of combined factors of skill variety, task significance and Task identity on High internal work motivation.
2. To predict through critical psychological states, the effect of Autonomyon High quality work performance.
3. To predict through critical psychological states, the effect of feedback on low absenteeism and turnover.
4. To evaluate the effect of moderating variables (that is, the perceived equity with comparison group) on employees motivation and productivity,

CONCEPTUAL REVIEW



Job Characteristic Model
Source: Hackman J.R, (1997)

The study framework was based on the characteristics model (JCM). The J C M identifies five Job characteristic and their relationship to personal and work outcomes (Hackman J.R.,1977).

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According to the Job characteristic Model, any job can be described in terms of five core job dimensions.

1) **Skill variety:** This is the degree to which a job requires a variety of different activities so that the worker can use a number of different skills and talents to complete an enriched job. It requires ability, intelligence, motivation, capacity and self-efficiency to handle different combination of these tasks.
2) **Task identity:** is the degree to which the job requires completion of a whole and identifiable unit or piece of work from the beginning to the end with its visible outcome. It increases variety of tasks resulting to enriching job activities, control, planning, executions and evaluations.
3) **Task significance:** Is defined as the degree to which the job has a substantial impact on the lives or work of other people. It provides attraction, importance and arouses internal reward and motivation
4) **Autonomy:** Is the degree to which the job provides substantial freedom, independence, and discretion to the individual in selecting their work and in determining the procedure to be used. It provides responsibility, authority and opportunity to perform.
5) **Feedback;** "JCM" described feedback as the degree to which carrying out the work activities required by the job results in the individual obtaining direct and clear information about the effectiveness of his or her performance. It provides knowledge, satisfaction and arouses interest for continuity.

MODERATING VARIABLES

Perceived equity with a comparison group (PECG), In this study, the authors defined the perceived Equity as (input/outcome ratio) with comparison group. It is is a moderating factor variables arising from employers and attitude of friends etc. In other words, PECG is a function of our perception of a given equity and the effectiveness of the given information cue in respect of the meaningfulness or fairness of the objective of the job. Perceived equity or (input/outcome ratio) with comparison group generates alternative and optional needs which, moderates or adjust the effect of the independent variables on the dependent variable). It might also be thought of as a contingency variables e.g If X (then independent variable), then Y (the dependent variable) will occur, but only under conditions of Z(the moderating variable). This means that an individual with better perceived equity alternative are more likely to experience the psychological states, under the condition that their job is enriched, and more meaningful than are their counterparts with low perceived equity. Moreover, they will respond more positively to the psychological states when a more attractive equity is perceived. The equity Theory explains the perceived equity with comparison groups. The theory recognises that individuals are concerned not only with the absolute amount of rewards they receive for their effort, but also with the relationship of this amount to what others receive. They make judgments as to th relationship between their inputs and outcomes and inputs and outputs of others. Based on one's inputs such as effort, experience, education and competences, one compares outcomes such as salary levels, raises, recognition and other factors. When people perceive an imbalance in their inputs-outcome-ratio relative to others, tension is created. This tension provides the basis for motivation, and people strive for what they perceive as equity and fairness.

For work performance or work outcomes, the study describes this dependent variable (performance) as the work outcomes generated by a multiple set of core job dimension that impacts on behavioural outcomes.

According to the Organizational behaviour literature, the current state of research, in respect of work holds that (1) People who work on jobs with high-core dimensions are generally more motivated, satisfied and productive than those who do not; (Hackman, 1977).

DEPENDENT PERFORMANCE VARIABLE: By definition, Personal and work outcomes of individual employee in this paper is linked to productivity, motivation and satisfaction otherwise referred to in the study as behavioural outcomes, or realized motivational outcomes of individual employees.

All the personal and work outcomes variables includes - High internal motivation, High quality performance, High Satisfaction with work, low absenteeism and turnover. They are realized work outcomes influenced by the core job dimension variables through psychological state. In other words, core job dimension variables

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including the combined skill variety, Task identity, Task Significance, Autonomy and Feedback, Operates through the psychological states in influencing personal and work outcome, variables, rather than influencing them directly (Hackman J.R.,2001).

HIGH INTERNAL MOTIVATION-Is operationally defined as the willingness to exert high level effort towards Organizational goal, conditioned by the efforts ability to satisfy some individual needs. The effort element in the definition is a measure of intensity. When someone is motivated, he or she tries hard. The quality of effort is very important for consideration, as well as its intensity when channeled in a direction that benefits the organization. The more the perceived equity level(i.e the moderating variable),the higher the willingness to exert effort and its intensity, thus the higher the psychological state in experiencing meaningfulness and influencing a higher internal motivation.

High Quality work performance is also operationally defined as the high quality and ability of a perfect job design that is capable of influencing productivity and satisfaction. Quality is defined as a zero error rate,(i.e.) the ability to produce a perfect product on the first try (Parasuraman et al,1980). It is also defined as a high level productivity and satisfaction. A more simple way of defining-High employee's work performance is as, a function of the interaction of ability, motivation, and opportunity to perform, that is performance = f(AxMx O) (Peters L.H et al,1980). In the model, if any of the variables is inadequate. performance will be negatively affected. This model helps to explain, for instance, the hard working student modest abilities who consistently out-perform his more gifted, but lazy rival in the class. Note that in the equation of the model,1,P=f(AxMxO), the individual intelligence and skills are subsumed as component elements of Ability and must be considered in addition to motivation and opportunity to perform if we are to be able to accurately explain and predict employee work performance. The last variable "'O" in the equation represent opportunity to perform - and is defined as the "Higher level of performance that are partially a function of an absence of obstacles that constrains the employee" in terms of provided tools and equipment that enhances good performance.

Better explained, the opportunity to perform "O" in the model provides supportive working environment, tools, equipment and supportive communication, rules and procedures and freedom to work under less supervision. When we attempt to asses why an employee may not be performing at the expected level that is believed he is capable of doing, we may need to take a look and consider the constraints present and determine, if the work environment is supportive. The question is: does the worker have adequate tools, equipment, material and supplies, favourable working condition, helpful co-worker and adequate time to do a good job.

High Satisfaction with the job

This outcome variable is operationally defined as the general attitude towards one's job, and the difference between the amount of rewards workers receive and the amount they believe they should receive. A person with a high level of job satisfaction holds positive attitude towards the job, while a person who is dissatisfied with his job hold negative attitude about the job. High satisfaction represents an attitude rather than behaviour.

High satisfaction with the job was defined as comparison of previous held expectation with perceived product or service performance (Homeburg el al2005). Satisfaction significantly influences employee retention, turn over and absenteeism. Satisfaction creates repeated or consistent behavioural standard.

Satisfaction is precisely meeting the performance standard. (Gomez et al 2004)defined satisfaction as rating of specific attributes. With respect to the focus of this study, (i.e the effect of core job dimension attributes on personal and work outcome), we have defined high satisfaction as a reflection of the differences between the previously held expectations with perceived equity with comparison groups. The marketing literature defines satisfaction as a function of ones expectation (E)and the service or product perceived performance (p), that is S = f(EP). With focus to this study, if the job perceived equity matches upwith expectation, the worker is satisfied, if it exceeds, then he is highly satisfied, if it falls short, the worker is dissatisfied. Workers form their expectation on the bases of social cues. Social cue plays an important role in moulding an individual perception of his job (Philip koteer 1980).

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Low absenteeism and Turnover

Absenteeism is operationally defined as failure to report to work. At the job level, a one day absence by a worker can cost an employee up to ($1000) in reduced efficiency and increased supervisory work load. The work flow is disrupted and often important decision must be delayed. It can result in a drastic reduction in quality of outcome or complete shutdown of production facility. Turnover is defined as voluntary and involuntary permanent withdrawal from the organisation. A high turnover in an organization means increased recruiting, selection and training cost. Turnover disrupts the efficient running of anorganization when knowledgeable and experienced personnel leaves the organization and replacement must be found and prepared to assume position responsibility.

Theoretical Frame Work.

The relationship between the core job dimension, critical psychological state and personal and work outcome is explained by the job characteristics model (JCM).The theory explains generally that when job is attractive, possibly because of its complexity, its importance and fulfilled requirement of reward of the job to individual, it arouse his critical psychological state to generate apsychological inner feelings of internal rewards, thought and tension that create bases for motivation. Its perception is affected and he does not only experience the meaningfulness of the work, but also feelings of personal responsibility, knowledge, internal motivation under th condition that their job is enriched. (Minner J.B,1989) opines that the job characteristics model has been well researched and most of the evidence supports the general frame work of the theory-that is, there is a multiple set of job characteristics, and this characteristics impact behavioural outcome. Figure 1.0 present the model, and illustrate how the first 3 dimension - (skill variety, task identity and task significance)- combine to create meaningful work. That is, if these (3)characteristics exist in a job, we can prove that the incumbent worker will view the job as being important, valuable and worthwhile.

Similarly, the job that possess, autonomy gives the incumbent a feeling of personal responsibility for the result. In the same vein if a job provides feedback the employee will know how effectively he or she must have performed. Judging from the motivational stand point, the model implies that internal reward are obtained by an individual when he learns (or obtain the knowledge of result) that he personally (experienced responsibility) and he performs well on a task that he cares about or experienced as meaningful to him (Oldham G.R,1975).

The model further explains that the more this psychological state variable involving-knowledge of the actual result of the work activities, responsibilities for outcome of the work, and experienced meaningfulness of the work are present, the greater will be the employees motivation, work performance and satisfaction and the lower the worker absenteeism and the likelihood of not leaving the organization.

Similar, the presented model shows that the link between the core job dimension characteristics through the psychological state, and the behavioural outcome are being moderated or adjusted by the strength of the "perceived equity with comparison group". This means that individuals with a high perceived equity with comparison group are more likely to experience psychological state when their job are enriched than their counter parts with a low "perceived group with comparison group". Moreover, they will respond more positively to the psychological state, when these three psychological variables are present than will, the low perceived equity with comparison group.

METHODOLOGY

The study design was based on the descriptive design. Descriptive design involves one time observation of independence and non-manipulated variable. By procedure, one questionnaire consisting of A, B,C sections was used in order to access the workers job motivating potentials, the psychological influenced responses and the moderating effect of perceived equity with comparison group. The 'A' section of the questionnaire focused on job motivating potential, the 'B 'part focus on the psychological state and the 'c' part on the perceived equity effect on the critical psychological state.

The method used was the mail questionnaire survey using printed questionnaire containing 1-7 points scale measurement. The study adopted and adjusted the earlier questionnaire used by (Oldham, G.R., 1980).The questionnaire content consists of necessary relevant questions based on a 1-7 point scale. Questionnaire administration on the respondents was made by selected trained student from the higher classes of Imo state poly technique, Omuma, Imo state.

A sample of 250 respondents were recruited from the target group made up of top, middle and lower man-power from production, engineering and administrative officers department of the organisations. They were

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stratified into sub-group of pre-set quota (i.e., required percentage). The stratification was considered necessary to ensure sample representativeness of the population and to increase the derived statistical precision.

In the ensuing analysis, the core dimensions were combined into a single predictive index called the motivating potential score (MPS). The motivating potential is the predictive index suggesting the potentials in a job.

Data collection-After the administration and collection of the questionnaires, the ensuing data were collected. With regard to the tools used and the construction question used in the study, we only used the result to scale questionnaires. The variables examined were:

- Skill variety-these states how much variety is there in your job.
- Task identity-this states, to what extent does your job involve doing a "Whole" and identifiable piece work.
- Task significance or importance-this states in general how significance or importance is your job.
- Autonomy-this state's how much autonomy is there in your job.
- Feedback-this states to what extent does doing the job itself provide you with information about your work performance

THE RESEARCH SAMPLE

The multinational groups in the food industry is the sector researched on, since their work activities are large and they often practiced job design and re-design policies. The idea was to determine how the organizations guides their managers in determining jobs that help them to predict employee motivation, work performance and job satisfaction.

The research sample consisted of two organzations in the area of food manufacturers. With regard to legal form, the two of the organizations were limited liability companies and were publicly listed Organization. The number of the employees was the basic criterion of assessing the size of the manufacturing organizations.

In the study, the two companies researched were large organizations and consist over 300 employees each. The two study sample sizes from the two companies were randomly obtained and were made up of top, middle and lower level employees of the aforesaid multinationals. The only criteria of choosing respondents were based on their familiarities with task enriched jobs with diverse complexities. About 250 regular workers were randomly selected as representative respondents from the companies. Similarly, two hundred and fifty questionnaires were estimated for distribution to the respondents through field trained higher students of Imo State Polytechnic, Omuma. It was assumed that a total of 240 correctly filled questionnaires were received and were further processed.

RESPONDENTS CHARACTERISTICS

Male (50.91%) and female respondents (49.09%) were represented proportionately. The age group of 16-25 years olds was dominant (62.31%) and was followed by other age group in ascending order in terms of age. i.e 26-35years old=(12.14%), 36-45(9.87%),46-55(9.42%) and age group of over 55(6.26%).In terms of profession, the factory workers were adjudged the most numerous group (55.27%), followed by Administrative/clerical officers(42.23%).

First, the researchers determined the score values of skill variety, Task identity, Task significance, Autonomy and feedback. In real practical terms, the score

Values of all sections were then computed to determine the mpotivating potential scores.

Predictions from the model

The core dimensions were combined into a single predictive index, called predictive index. (figure 1.02).

$$\text{Motivating Potential Score (MPS)} = \left[\text{Skill variety} + \text{Task identity} + \text{Task significant} \right] \text{Autonomy} \times \text{feedback}$$

(Fig 1.02) Computing a motivating potential score

The motivating potential score is a predictive index suggesting the motivating potential in a job. It is an artificially created overall indicator (index) combining the aspect of several partial measures, motivation,

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performance and satisfaction. From the predictive index, jobs that are high on motivating potential must be high in at least one of the three factors that lead to experiencing meaningfulness, and they must be high on both Autonomy and feedback. If jobs score is high on motivating potential, the model predicts that motivation, performance, and satisfaction will be positively affected, and absenteeism and turnover will be reduced.

Similarly, as observed in the job characteristic model in Fig 1.00, the more the three psychological states are present, the greater will be the employee's motivation, performance and satisfaction, and the lower his or her absentee ism and turnover. The result shows that the links between the job dimensions and the outcomes are moderated or adjusted by the "perceived equity with comparison group" i.e when the ratio comparison is high, it influences the workers perception higher, to generate high internal motivation, high quality work performance and low absenteeism and turnover.

Conclusion

The study reveals that a multiple set of core job dimension attributes impacts behavioural outcomes. These job dimensions operate through the critical psychological states in influencing personal and work outcome variables rather than influence them directly. In this study, the perceived equity with comparison group was also found to be a meaningful moderating variable in the adjustment of job dimension characteristics-outcome-relationship. Equity theory was used in the explanation of the perceived equity with comparison group, and same was found to deal with all the four dependent variables including, productivity, Absenteeism, Turnover and Satisfaction (Landy FJ. and Becker, W.S. el al1987). However, it is discovered that equity theory is strongest when predicting differences in the employee productivity (Stephen Robinson, 1989).

The study also showed that individuals with a high perceived equity with comparison group are more likely to experience the psychological state when their jobs are enriched or complex than are their counterparts with low perceived equity. Moreover, the individual person will respond more positively to the psychological states,when he has knowledge of the result or (feedback),that he personally experienced responsibility (autonomy) and has performed well on task that he cares about(i.e experienced meaningfulness) Hackman J.R.et al 1975).

Further readings; the researcher recommends that further research should be undertaking on the effect of core job dimension attribute on Organizational performance as a partial outcomes of research of this study.

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