Does Job Characteristics Predicted Employee Job Satisfaction?

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Abstract: Employee job satisfaction is the important factor that will determine employee performance, which in turn will determine organizational performance. Employee job satisfaction influenced by various factors, such as personal and non-personal factors. The ability to understand what factors most determine employee job satisfaction is a challenge and an important task for managers. Among various non-personal factors, several previous studies found that job characteristics are of the important in determining employee job satisfaction. This research intended to understand better the interplay between job characteristics and job satisfaction. Based on studies and descriptions of various previous studies, this study proposes job characteristics positively and significantly effect job satisfaction.

Keyword: Job Characteristics, Job Satisfaction.

1. Introduction

The increased effectivity, efficiency and creativity that lead to innovation are keys for organizations in facing competition pressures as a result of environmental turbulence (Bogler & Somech, 2005). Efforts aimed to increase effectivity, efficiency and creativity, of course, really depend on how management manages all its resources. The management of these resources is also very much determined by the availability and quality of the resources owned.

One of the most important resources in building competitive that could increase the effectivity, efficiency and creativity of an organization is human resources. Bogler & Somech (2005) argue that the success of an organization to increase its competitiveness through increasing effectivity, efficiency and creativity depends on people' willingness to make a positive contribution to face change. People in organizations who have a high work ethic and are willing to contribute positively will enable the organization to improve efficiency, effectiveness, and creativity by contributing to the transformation of resources, innovation, and adaptability in an ever-changing environment (Andrade & Westover, 2018; Organ, 1988; Podssakoff, MacKenzie, Paine and Bacharach, 2000; Williams & Anderson, 1991).

Many factors can affect individual's willingness to contribute and high commitment to the organization. Podssakof et al. (2000) argued factors that affect individuals' willingness to contribute and provide high commitment could be grouped in four categories, namely:

1. individual's characteristics (workers) such as workers' attitudes, disposition variables,workers' perceptions of roles;
2. characteristics of the task;
3. organizational characteristics;
4. leadership behavior.

Job satisfaction as one of the characteristics of an individual has a big role in determining whether an individual in the organization will be willing to contribute and have a high commitment or not. Employee' satisfaction is a pleasant emotional state, which is the result of their job valuation (Locke, 1969). The higher the employee job satisfaction, the more motivated workers will be to think about ways or work methods that are more efficient and effective. The higher the employee job satisfaction, the more motivated workers will be to do things that are more than their responsibility in the form of creative actions, helping colleagues, and the desire to improve organizational performance (Cohen and Kol, 2004; Lian & Ling, 2018; MacKenzie et al., 2000).

Several studies have found job characteristics are associated with job satisfaction (Chang & Lee, 2006; Chin & Chen, 2005; Hackman & Oldham, 1975; Lian & Ling, 2018). Job characteristics are job attributes that can generate individual's motivation (Chin & Chen, 2005). Job characteristics consist of five characteristics, namely:

variety, identity, significance, autonomy and feedback (Hackman & Oldham, 1975). Variety relates to the extent in which workers use different skills on their work. Identity relates to the extent in which workers complete a whole or part of a job. Significance relates with the significance impact of a job on others. Autonomy relates with freedom and independence of a worker in designing their work methods. Feedback relates with worker's understanding of their performance from the work itself, colleagues, superiors, or consumers.

Many research findings, both theoretical and empirical, shows that job characteristics is an important factor that determined worker's satisfaction (Hackman & Oldham, 1975; 1980; Hauff & Richter, 2015; Loher et al., 1985; Tumer & Lawrence, 1965). The meta-analysis conducted by Loher et al. (1985) found out the autonomic characteristics had the most effect on employee' satisfaction. Thus, it's clear, both theoretically and empirically, job characteristics positively effect job satisfaction. Based on the description above, this study is intended to find out more about how the actual interplay between job characteristics and job performance.

2. Lierature Review

Job satisfaction is one of the most popular area in behavioral research. Locke (1976) estimates that by 1976 there were around 3,350 articles and dissertations on job satisfaction been written. Cranny, Smith, & Stone (1992) estimated more than 5,000 studies on job satisfaction have been published. MacKenzie et al. (2000) added up to 1996 the number may have doubled.

Job satisfaction is basically an expression of how a person feels about work and various other aspects of his job. In other words, job satisfaction reflects a person's attitude towards his/her job. Job satisfaction is commonly defined as emotional reaction to a work situation (Cranny, Smith & Stone, 1992; Ilies & Judge, 2004; Locke, 1969, 1976). The most well-known and widely used is the definition put forward by Locke (1969, 1976), which says job satisfaction is a feeling of a pleasure, or a positive emotion arise from a person's positive assessment of a job or work experience. In measuring job satisfaction, this emotional aspect generally gets less attention than cognitive aspects. Job satisfaction is generally measured through a "single-shot" in a retrospective survey which is actually only good at capturing cognitive aspects of a job, and it less able to capture affective experiences of work (Rai & Maheshwari, 2020; Ilies & Judge, 2002).

In the late 1920s the so-called Hawthorne Studies emerged. This study was conducted at the Hawthorne power plant in Chicago, Illinois with the aim of examining the relationship between work fatigue and industrial efficiency. One of the things examined in this study is the use of rest periods during the working period, and the reduction of working hours during the working week. Workers in this study were separated from the working population and supervised by only one supervisor. Researchers found that even though workers were given short periods of rest, less supervision, and shorter weekly hours of work, worker productivity was higher.

Based on these findings, researchers began to explore factors such as interpersonal relationships and work attitudes (Lian & Ling, 2018). Research is developed by digging deeper into the concepts of human relations through involving a very broad interview program involving thousands of workers from thousands of power plants to explore and understand workers' attitudes, supervision, and morals.

New theories regarding job satisfaction emerge in late 1960s. First theory is called Discrepancy Theory (Andrade & Westover, 2018; Rai & Maheshwari, 2020; Loher et al., 1985). This theory concerns the belief that workers' satisfaction or dissatisfaction with their work is closely related to their perception of the difference between what workers expect with what they actually get from organization (Posner & Kouzes, 198). Job satisfaction is also influenced by how important an individual desire is for workers. For example, additional vacation time may be more important to certain workers than the opportunity to earn extra money through working overtime (Loher et al., 1985).

In the following decades, The Model of Facet Satisfaction developed. This theory is similar to the discrepancy theory in which it is believed that workers will feel satisfied with an element or factor of their job if they get what they feel they deserve for that element or factor (Siegel & Lane, 1982). The difference with the discrepancy theory is that in this theory the job is broken down into several elements or components, then each element is assessed for its level of satisfaction for the worker, then these separate scores will be combined to get a total job satisfaction score. According to this theory, even though a worker receives more than what he deserves for a certain element, the worker will feel dissatisfied with that element because of his inner feelings of guilt (Loher et al., 1985).

In 1978, Opponent-Process Theory developed which was significantly different from the previous models. This theory views job satisfaction as an emotional condition or state and involves the view that emotional balance is the most important thing in job satisfaction. The idea behind this theory is that if a person experiences an extreme

emotional state, such as that experienced with job satisfaction or dissatisfaction, then it will trigger the opposite. Thus, although the worker is initially very happy with the positive rewards, then the worker will feel that the amount of the reward is insufficient, and he will feel dissatisfied for a while until a more neutral emotional state is found or felt. Thus, a person's job satisfaction level will vary significantly over time (Loher et al., 1985).

Several studies indicate the importance of the two determinant of job satisfaction, namely: personal characteristics or dispositional factor, and work motivation (Gillen, 2000). Some examples of individual characteristics include: ability, experience, organization, knowledge, and work history (Gillen, 2000). Another characteristic is the strength of the work ethic of the workers. For example: it is believed that someone with a high work ethic will have higher job satisfaction than a person with a low work ethic (Gillen, 2000). Arvey, Abraham, Bouchard, & Segal (1989) separate personal factors that affect job satisfaction into two categories, namely: positive and negative effects. The positive effect concerns how much capacity a person has in experiencing pleasure in his work, and the experience of feeling trust and pleasure in the organization (Loher et al., 1985). On the other hand, the negative effect concerns on how much a person's tendency to feel anxious, suspicious, afraid or dissatisfied with organization or employer (Arvey et al., 1989).

Kreitner & Kinicki (1989) state there are four main factors which contribute to a person job satisfaction and dissatisfaction. First, fulfillment of needs, related to the extent to which workers feel that their work allows them to meet their needs. Second, it deals with the discrepancy between what is expected to be accepted and what is actually accepted. Unlike the model discussed earlier, in this case the worker will feel satisfied if what is received exceeds his expectations. Third, the achievement of values, where job satisfaction related to the extent in which workers feel their work is able to meet the expected values. Fourth, justice, concerning the extent to which the organization is fair to workers (Kreitner & Kinicki, 1989).

3.   Job Characteristics

Job characteristics are job attributes which produce motivational functions to workers (Chang & Lee, 2006). According to Hackman & Oldham (1976), job characteristics have five characteristics, namely: variety, identity, significance, autonomy and feedback. Hackman & Oldham (1980) emphasized that jobs that are considered to have attractive job characteristics are able to inspire workers to complete the job better, and thus increase job satisfaction of these workers, which in turn will result in high work performance.

Hackman & Oldham (1976) introduced a theory of job characteristics to explain conditions that can intrinsically motivate when a person performs the job. Organizations could encourage positive work's attitudes, and improve work's quality through the five job characteristic dimensions.

The theory put forward by Hackman & Oldham (1976) was developed based on several theories, including: Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory which states different factors affect worker satisfaction; Activation theory proposed by Scott (1966) which analyzes the understanding of individual work behavior in organizations; theory of the socio-technical system (Chang & Lee, 2006) which is not only provide a significant perception of interdependence between technical views of the job with broader social environment where the work is carried out, but, it also provide a clear specifications on how the work itself is carried out along with the social environment influence each other (Hackman & Oldham, 1976).

Hackman & Oldham's model focus on the above five. Therefore, the main objective of the model is to link the work with motivation, job satisfaction and job performance. Task characteristics were associated with behavioral citizenship factor. Farh, Podsakoff, & Organ (1990) compared relative effect of task characteristics, leadership behavior and job satisfaction to organizational citizenship. The basic premise of this model is that the objective characteristics of a job will affect job results, such as satisfaction, or performance (Fried & Ferris, 1987). Thus, workers' reports regarding the characteristics of the work should represent the actual characteristics of a job. Information, of course, really needs to be considered by managers, because this information is very useful in designing and redesigning a job.

This model speculates a person's experience positively influenced by way in which individual learns, what he has accomplished in carrying out his work, and what he cares about. These individual experiences positively influence individual's incentive to perform well in the future (Hackman & Oldham, 1976).

Experts argue that psychological measures mixing personal needs and preferences with objective characteristics of job (Schwab & Cumming, 1976). Salancik & Pfeffer explained that supervisors are an important source of social information which could influence workers' attitudes towards their work or duties. If the leader

pays attention to the importance of a job for organization, for organization's mission and vision, then the workers' perception of the importance of a job or task may increase.

The most famous model in job design is the Hackman & Oldham's model, namely Job Characteristics Model. The five existing dimensions will affect psychological conditions which in turn affect work outcomes, such as intrinsic work motivation, job satisfaction, attendance, turnover and work quality. Job characteristics plays important role in organizational theory. Work characteristics allow organization identify differences and similarities between jobs, and also able to determine the internal work motivation of job design.

Hackman & Oldham (1976) developed a Job Diagnostic Survey (JDS) to measure the five dimensions of job characteristics. JDS diagnoses jobs as a basis for consideration for job redesign to assign jobs that have the potential to increase motivation and job satisfaction (Boonzaaier, Ficker & Rust, 2001). JDS is able to facilitate processes that enable managers to achieve practical of optimal fit between workers and their jobs. This can be done by realizing that problems of motivation, satisfaction, and performance are caused by deficiencies in a job (Boonzaaier et al., 2001).

Several studies found significant relationship between job characteristics and commitment (Lin & Hsieh, 2002; Niehoff, Moorman, Blakely, & Fuller, 2001); significant relationship between job characteristics and job satisfaction (Taber & Alliger, 1995; Thomas, Buboltz, & Winkelspecht, 2004); and significant relationship between job characteristics, job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Abbott, Boyd, & Miles, 2006; Bhuian & Menguc, 2002; Nauman, 1993).

Based on the description above, this research can formulate the following propositions:
P: Job characteristics positively and significantly effect employee job satisfaction.

4. Conclusion

This research is intended to look deeper into how the relationship between job characteristics constructs and employee job satisfaction. Many previous research findings found that job characteristics are an important determinant for the formation of employee job satisfaction. The problem is which characteristics need main attention? Of course, these important characteristics may differ between organizations and between industry sectors. More research in this area needs to be done given the possible differences that can occur in organizations between industrial sectors. Of course, this research is expected to add empirical evidence about how job characteristics influence employee job satisfaction.

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