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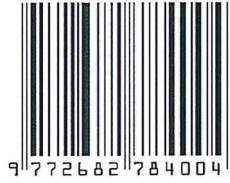
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ABSTRACT

The study aims to propose a conceptual framework that investigates if job characteristics (skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy and feedback) will influence job outcomes of employees. It will also examine the mediating effects of psychological factors (experienced meaningfully, experienced responsibility and knowledge of results) towards that relationship. Positive psychological states are associated with work motivation, growth satisfaction, general satisfaction, and work effectiveness. Besides, critical psychological states (experienced meaningfully, experienced responsibility, knowledge of results) are included as the moderating variable. The job characteristics (skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy and feedback) influence the employees' job outcomes. A large body of research provides evidence that the way jobs are designed impacted the results of workers (e.g. job satisfaction) and employers (e.g. productivity). Jobs can be redesigned to increase work efficiency, minimise physical strain, and motivate the employees. A set of core job characteristics influences affective and motivational outcomes. This study used a combination of the established framework by Hackman et al. (1975,1976, 1980) and Fried & Ferris; Hogan & Martel (1987) to propose the conceptual framework. The outcomes of this research help to produce

more productive employees and job redesign to fit specific job titles.

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1. Introduction

To date, government and private agencies at all levels need to be more responsive service, better collaboration with customers, increased transparency to the general public, and more proactive efforts to improve customer satisfaction. An organizational capability to achieve its goal mainly depends on its employees' talent and effort. Employees positive attitudes about roles and responsibilities can be formed when the managers care about them and show ethical behaviours (Velasco Vizcaíno et al., 2021). Thus, employees' work attitudes can considerably influence their organisational behaviour and affect organizational capabilities (Harper, 1973; Head, 1990). Work attitudes are collections of feelings, beliefs, and thoughts about behaving that people hold about their job and organization (George dan Jones, 2011). Attitudes, including behavioural and affective and cognitive components, are essential antecedents of employee participation and role behaviour in work environments (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1972). Work attitudes and emotional intelligence are carried out from the employee's high commitment to the organization (Velasco Vizcaíno et al., 2021). In leading to the organisation's success, job characteristics (skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy and feedback; (Hackman & Oldham, 1976) influence critical psychological states, which in turn influence work outcomes (Bohlander & Snell, 2013; Cascio, 2010; Moorhead & Griffen, 2008). Positive psychological states are associated with work motivation, growth satisfaction, general satisfaction, and work effectiveness (Bohlander & Snell, 2013; Cascio, 2010; Moorhead & Griffen, 2008).

The omission of the critical psychological states from empirical investigations of the job characteristics model could lead to erroneous predictions (Fox & Feldman, 1988). For example, skill variety is positively correlated with job satisfaction could lead practising managers to believe that satisfaction can be improved simply by increasing the core job characteristics. However, according to the job characteristics model, skill variety should only lead to positive outcomes to the extent that this increase results in a corresponding rise in experienced meaningfulness of the work.

Psychological capital states are characterized by having confidence (self-efficacy) to take on and put in the necessary effort to succeed at challenging tasks, making a positive attribution, and persevering towards a goal to achieve and when beset by problems and adversity, sustaining and bouncing back and even beyond (resilience) to attain success (Luthans et al., 2008). A large body of research provides evidence that the way jobs are designed impacts outcomes that are important to workers (e.g., job satisfaction) and employers (e.g., productivity). Job design can be approached with one or more goals in mind. For instance, jobs can be designed to increase production efficiency, minimise physical strain, or maximise how they motivate workers (Campion & Thayer, 1985). A set of core job characteristics impact some critical psychological states, which, in turn, influence a group of affective and motivational outcomes.

Moreover, jobs with a high concentration of motivational traits induce psychological states, which improve the chance of desired results (Patricia & Asoba, 2020). Interestingly, most successive research has omitted the critical psychological states, focusing on the direct impact of the core job characteristics on the outcomes. It is hoped that the outcomes of this research will result in better job outcomes for employees in Malaysia.

2. Literature Review

Job Characteristics

Hackman and Oldham's (Hackman, 1980; Hackman & Oldham, 1975, 1976) job characteristics model is one of the most influential theories ever presented in organizational psychology. It has served as the basis for scores of studies and job redesign interventions over the past two decades, and this research has been extensively reviewed (Fried & Ferris, 1987; Loher et al., 1985; Taber & Taylor, 1990). The vast majority of research has supported the validity of the job characteristics model, although critiques and modifications have been offered (Roberts & Glick, 1981; Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978). Job characteristics include skills variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy and feedback.

An evaluation of the research conducted on the job characteristics model suggested that few researchers tested the model the way it was initially proposed. According to Hackman and Oldham (Hackman, 1980; Hackman & Oldham, 1976), the critical psychological states make up the "causal core of the model" and should fully mediate the effects of the core job characteristics on relevant individual outcomes. Hackman and Oldham developed the model by identifying psychological states important for job satisfaction and motivation and then worked backwards to identify job characteristics that could elicit these psychological states. The job characteristics influenced the personal experience of the employees' towards their job and work-related outcomes (Gu et al., 2021).

The omission of the critical psychological states from job characteristics model investigations could be warranted if theoretical or practical rationales for this practice. However, "virtually no empirical evidence has accumulated supporting the practice of excluding the critical psychological states from tests of the theory. Most importantly, the omission of the critical psychological states from empirical investigations of the job characteristics model could lead to erroneous predictions (Fox & Feldman, 1988). For example, skill variety is positively correlated with job satisfaction could lead practising managers to believe that satisfaction can be improved simply by increasing the core job characteristics. However, according to the job characteristics model, skill variety should only lead to positive outcomes to the extent that this increase results in a corresponding rise in experienced meaningfulness of the work. Suppose an increase in variety does not result in increased feelings of meaningfulness. In that case, it is reasonable to hypothesize that this would result in a negative or non-significant change in satisfaction.

The increased variety might only reflect more boring, meaningless things to do. In short, without measuring the critical psychological states, our understanding of how core job characteristics affect work outcomes can be incomplete or misleading. Due to the prominence of the job characteristics model, the lack of data regarding the relationships between the critical psychological states and the other elements of the job characteristics model can have far-reaching consequences. Further, this lack of available data has prevented the major meta-analytic reviews of the job characteristics model from making definitive statements about the critical psychological states. While Fried and Ferris (1987) included 76 studies in their meta-analysis of the job characteristics model, they could find only eight studies that examined the entire job characteristics model (i.e., including the critical psychological states) and only three that tested the mediating effects of the critical psychological conditions.

Thus, Fried and Ferris (1987) could not make definitive conclusions about the validity or importance of the critical psychological states, although both stated in their qualitative discussion that there was suggestive evidence that the critical psychological states are essential to the

model. However, Loher et al.,(1985) meta-analysis study did not address the critical psychological states; instead, it focused solely on the relationships between the core job characteristics and satisfaction. Indeed, additional job characteristics, such as position clarity and supervision quality, are linked to higher levels of job satisfaction (Gu et al., 2021).

Thus, despite over two decades of active research on the job characteristics model, there has yet to be a comprehensive statement made concerning the role of the critical psychological states in the job characteristics model, and there has yet to be a quantitative review of the job characteristics model examining all the relationships within the job characteristics model.

The five core characteristics can be combined to form a motivating potential score (MPS) for a job, which can be used to index how likely a job affect an employee's attitudes and behaviours. The MPS can be calculated using the core dimensions above, as follows:

$$\text{MPS} = (\text{Skill variety} + \text{Task Identity} + \text{Task Significance}/3) \times \text{Autonomy} \times \text{Feedback}.$$

If a job has a high MPS, the Job Characteristics Model predicts that motivation, performance and job satisfaction will be positively affected, and the likelihood of negative outcomes, such as absenteeism and turnover, will be reduced. Additionally, Kulikowski et al. (2021) found that job characteristics are the most significant predictors for job motivation.

The Critical Psychological States

Psychological capital states are characterized by having confidence (self-efficacy) to take on and put in the necessary effort to succeed at challenging tasks, making a positive attribution (optimism), and persevering towards a goal (hope) to grow and when beset by problems and adversity, sustaining and bouncing back and even beyond (resilience) to attain success (Luthans et al., 2008). However, this method does not measure whether an employee finds meaningful work. Once employees comprehend the implication of their tasks and responsibilities, they can nurture them due to psychological safety states (Kulikowski et al., 2021).

An employee could be absorbed and dedicated but might not experience meaningfulness or responsibility in the job, ultimately leading to dissatisfaction. Thus, the present investigation was designed on the model of Hackman and Oldham (1975). The job dimensions model measures psychological capital states as mediating between job dimensions and personal outcomes. Most investigations have omitted the psychological capital states and have investigated only the direct relationships between the job characteristics and several individual outcomes (Behson et al., 2000).

The psychological capital states are measured by three dimensions of experienced meaningfulness of work the degree to which the employee experiences the job as generally meaningful, valuable, and worthwhile, experienced responsibility for work outcomes, the degree to which the employee feels personally accountable and responsible for the results of the work they do and knowledge of results the degree to which the employee knows and understands, continuously, how effectively they are performing the job. The job dimensions model measures psychological capital states as mediating between job characteristics and job outcomes. An individual can achieve high work inspiration if these three psychological states are accomplished (Siruri & Cheche, 2021).

Job outcomes

Job characteristics are the precursors of work engagement. When work commitment is high, employees are relied upon to perform better. Many previous studies and literature reviews stated that work engagement influences job outcomes (Ghazawy et al., 2021). Thus, high work engagement or commitment will impact the job outcomes positively. Indeed, significant job outcomes result from job satisfaction (Zhang & Hirschi, 2021).

An increase in job satisfaction leads to various job outcomes, leading to an increase in performance (Mharapara et al., 2021). Therefore, job satisfaction will result in a good job outcome and job performance of the employees. Moreover, accurate and comprehending job characteristics significantly impact the employee's job outcome and leads to better work design decisions (Mharapara et al., 2021). Finally, the organization can achieve their key performance indicator and goals.

Job satisfaction

Five items from the job diagnostic survey (Hackman & Oldham, 1975) measure general job satisfaction. Examples of items are: 'Generally speaking, I am very satisfied with this job'; 'I frequently think of quitting this job'; and 'Most people in this position are very satisfied with the job'. Participants used a 1-5 rating scale numbered from 1 (strong disagree), through 3 (Neither agree nor disagree), to 5 (strongly agree). Scores on two negatively worded items were subsequently reverse coded. Total scores could range from 5 to 25, with higher scores indicating more satisfaction ($\alpha=0.76$).

Individual differences include both demographic and dispositional variables. Demographic variables that have been investigated include age, education, work experience and organizational tenure. Research on career stages has suggested that employee perspectives on their job and profession evolve, which means variables such as age and organizational tenure may be related, perhaps nonlinearly, to job satisfaction.

3. Methodology

The study itself will be based on primary data sources. The primary data will be required to provide a source of information for the research. The quantitative method generates numerical data since many cases will be involved and generalised to a broader population. To generate the quantitative data, the instruments used will have consisted of a questionnaire. The procedures of administering data collection are presented in the following sub-sections.

Target population

Employees from private and government agencies at various levels of management are the study's population of interest. These respondents were selected because of their diverse job characteristics and examine how the mediating effect of critical psychological aspects influenced their job success in related domains. The targeted private and government entities would be located in the Klang Valley region. The top five government and private agencies will be chosen for data collection. A random sample of employees is selected and used from this group.

Testing for mediation

Several regression analyses will be conducted to test the mediation effect of psychological factors. The significance of the coefficients will be examined at each step, as shown in Figure 1, where the independent variable is job characteristics inclusive of skill variety,

task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback, and the mediating variable is critical psychological factor inclusive of experienced meaningfully experienced responsibility, and knowledge of results. As seen in Figure 1, the pathways (coefficients) are marked by arrows.

The regression analysis will reveal whether or not there are zero-order correlations between the variables. If one or more of these associations is shown to be insignificant, researchers typically conclude that mediation is neither plausible nor unlikely (although this is not always true). A significant association usually necessitates determining whether complete or partial mediation occurred. If the link between the independent variable and the dependent variable remains significant after correcting for the effects of the intervening variable, partial mediation has occurred.

Preparation and data collection procedures

Questionnaires will be designed and delivered as research instruments in English and Malays. The survey instrument will be pre-tested at several organisations. The pre-test was primarily used for further validation in the context of the study and identifying and fixing potential problems. Four main factors will be chosen and put into the questionnaire for data collection based on the pre-test results. The following are the details of the core dimensions and their constructs: A) Respondent Personal Data/Demographics; B) Job Characteristics; C) Critical Psychological; D) Job Outcomes. All the items will be rated on a five-point Likert-like scale ranging from "1" "Not at all" to "5" "Large extent" depending on the perceived degree of confidence of the individual respondent.

The questionnaire

Because one of the goals of this study is to explain job characteristics as a dependent variable and critical psychological as a mediating variable, valid and reliable assessments of the variables are required. This was accomplished by a review of past papers linked to the topic. Data were collected through various past studies, and this study used a combination of the established framework by Hackman and Oldham (1975, 1976), Fried and Ferris (1987) and Hogan and Martell (1987) to propose the conceptual framework as seen in Figure 1.

The questionnaire will be divided into sections based on the study's variables, as previously mentioned in data collecting procedures. Employees from selected private and government entities in the Klang Valley area would be the primary respondents to the questionnaire. For data quality control, the questionnaire will be subjected to validity and reliability tests.

Validity test

A Content Validity Index (CVI) will be computed for this purpose using the formula as follows

$$\text{Content Validity Index (CVI)} = \frac{\text{Number of items declared valid}}{\text{Total number of items on the questionnaire}}$$

The validity score should be roughly 0.8, which compares well to 0.7; according to Amin (2005), if the content validity index is more than 0.7, the questions are related to the research variables.

Reliability test

The instrument's reliability will be evaluated using Cronbach's alpha coefficient test. The reliability test will be performed using the SPSS software for the complete instrument. The same procedure will be used to examine the reliability of each measure in each part of the questionnaire.

4. Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study can be seen in figure 1.

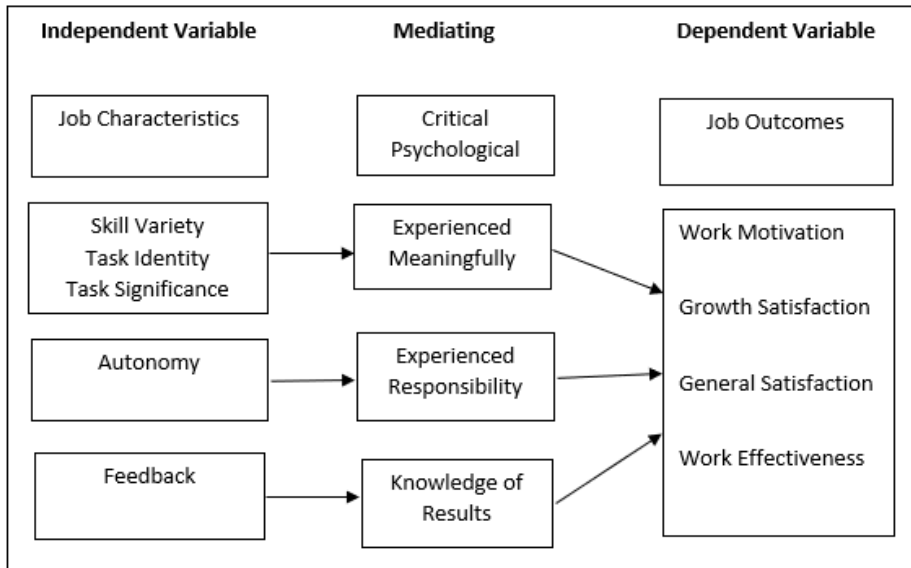


Figure 1: Conceptual framework

A conceptual framework for the mediating roles of critical psychological factors towards the relationship between job characteristics and job outcomes.

The job characteristics directly derive from the three states. Indeed, the first three characteristics (skill variety, task variety and task significance) pertain to the meaningfulness of the work. Autonomy directly correlates to responsibility for job outcomes, and knowledge of the actual results relates to feedback. Pictured as in figure 1, the characteristics and psychological states operate in a continuous feedback loop that allows employees to be motivated by thoroughly owning and understanding the work involved.

Therefore, the goal should be to design the job so that the core characteristics complement the psychological states of the employees to positive outcomes. The five core job characteristics can be combined to form a motivating potential score to index how likely a job affects an employee's attitudes and behaviours. Analysis of studies of the model provides some support for the validity of the Job Characteristics Theory.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, job characteristics are deemed essential and influence psychological states, which finally influence the work outcome of the employees. Indeed, the study proposed that the survey results will address these issues among job characteristics and job outcomes among the employees in Malaysia. Moreover, it is hoped that a new model of job fit, job outcome and psychological elements among the employees can be addressed accordingly. Employees' work attitudes can considerably influence their organisational behaviour and affect organizational capabilities. Work attitudes are collections of feelings, beliefs, and thoughts about behaving that people hold about their job and organization. Employees positive attitudes about roles and responsibilities can be formed when managers care about them and show ethical behaviours. A large body of research provides evidence that the way jobs are designed impacts outcomes important to workers and employers. Job design can be approached with one or more goals in mind. A set of core job characteristics impact some critical psychological states, which, in turn, influence a group of affective and motivational outcomes. The job characteristics model is one of the most influential theories ever presented in organizational psychology. It has served as the basis for scores of studies and job redesign interventions over the past two decades. Without measuring the critical psychological states, our understanding of how core job characteristics affect work outcomes can be incomplete or misleading. Psychological capital states are characterized by having confidence (self-efficacy) and making a positive attribution (optimism), and persevering towards a goal (hope) to grow. An employee could be absorbed and dedicated but might not experience meaningfulness or responsibility in the job, ultimately leading to dissatisfaction. Job characteristics are the precursors of work engagement. When work commitment is high, employees are relied upon to perform better. An increase in job satisfaction leads to various job outcomes, leading to increased performance. Demographic variables that have been investigated include age, education, work experience and organizational tenure.

Recommendation for future research to test the model to investigate the current state of the mediating roles of critical psychological factors towards the relationship between job characteristics and job outcomes due to the pandemic or endemic Covid 19. Indeed, studies on cross-cultural context also can be carried out in the future.

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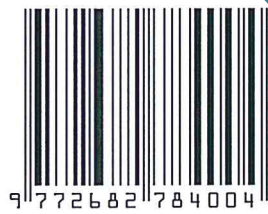
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