

Organizational behaviour and design

Design



It seems that the argument derives from the Job Characteristics Theory (COT) model developed by Hickman and Lollo (1980) who attempt to define the association between core Job dimensions (characteristics of a person's job) and work outcomes.

According to ACT, organizations with sufficient levels of all the five characteristics to their employees in Job setting will lead to improved motivation and work effectiveness. But apparently the characteristics mentioned in the argument are only three out of the five which are required under the ACT model. With wide literature review and empirical evidence check from researches, this paper examines its pros and cons for this argument and conducts further critical analysis.

II. Argumentative Analysis

2. Brief introduction to the argument and its theoretical origin

It seems that the argument statement derives from the Job Characteristics Theory (COT); therefore it is necessary to have a quick review of the ACT model. The model has five core Job dimensions (skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy and feedback) as shown in the figure below. The 5 characteristic dimensions affect the psychological states which in turn affect work outcomes such as Internal motivation and better performance (Leg and Bruit, 2008).

Skill variety refers to the extent to which multiple high-level skills are required to perform tasks for a Job. Feedback refers to the degree about how an employee gets the information about their work effectiveness. Feedback comes from within an organization (e. G. Managers, peers, subordinates) and/or from external parties (e. G. Suppliers, customers etc).

conclusion is made, it is appropriate to examine the pros and cons for the argument through wide literature review. Ross There are some generally pros for this statement from both theoretical and empirical perspective. Firstly, this argument is similar to the general frame work of JET model except for the two missing two characteristics (task identity and task significance). The three characteristics in the argument form the major part of Hickman and Oldie's effort in the extension of the motivation theory by Herzberg (1959). This explicit Job enrichment framework specifies that enriching Jobs in characteristics like skill variety, autonomy and feedback will modify people's psychological states and enhances their work effectiveness in the end.

The three elements in the argument are covered by Hickman and Oldie's JET model which is the dominant theory and approach in Job design nowadays. Once identified and confirmed, skill variety, autonomy and feedback can be redesigned in the direction to improved motivation and work outcomes. Secondly, skill variety, autonomy and feedback have been used in practice as the core characteristics in Job enrichment. Many researches provide evidences that the way jobs are designed meeting skill variety, autonomy and feedback characteristics result in improved motivation and work effectiveness.

Job design can be approached with one or several particular goals in mind and Jobs can be designed in such a way as skill variety, autonomy and feedback in the interest of increasing production efficiency, or focus on particular characteristics with aim to maximize the extent to which they are motivating to the worker (Companion and Thayer, 1985). Three elements in <https://assignbuster.com/organizational-behaviour-and-design/>

the argument (skill variety, autonomy and feedback) are covered by the Hickman and Lollo (1980) model.

Humphrey, Maharani & Morrison (2007) research indicates that Job designs that meet the characteristics of skill variety, autonomy and feedback result in improved motivation and work effectiveness. Other searches indicate that there are some association between core Job characteristics and Job satisfaction and motivation. Judge & Church (2000) study of various organizations and different types of Jobs shows generally characteristics of skill variety, autonomy and feedback emerges as the most important Job facet and linked with motivation. Characteristics as skill variety, autonomy and feedback and improved motivation.

Thirdly, there is wide range of industries where the three characteristics in the argument are designed into Jobs. Empirical studies have been done testing Job heartiness and related motivation and work outcome in different work settings across wide industry sectors including financial institutions, government agencies, manufacturing sector and various service organizations. Most of the studies support the characteristics aspects (Moons, Xii, & Fang, 1992; Boson, Eddy, & Lorenz, 2000; Fried & Ferris, 1987; Humphrey, Maharani, & Morrison, 2007).

Those researches come with constant relationship between designed core Job characteristics and improved motivation and work outcomes. Cons Despite the above pros for the argument, there are apparently some limitations to his argument. The following are cons identified after critical analysis. Firstly, the three factors mentioned in the argument are not

inclusive of all the characteristic dimensions in JET model which affects motivation and work effectiveness. Hickman and Lollo (1976) claim that Job motivation is highest when all the core Job characteristics are performed at high rate.

But the argument covers only three (skill variety, autonomy and feedback) of the five characteristics. The other two characteristics (task identity and task significance) are missing. Researches by Rene & Vandenberg (1995) and John, Xii & Fang (1992) indicate that all the five core Job characteristics are required to create the psychological states which in turn are associated with positive outcomes in motivation and better performances. Secondly, there are apparent limitations in the argument to explain the characteristics of skill variety, autonomy and feedback and improved motivation and work effectiveness.

With its origin from ACT model which was originally a purely situational model, the argument cannot explain the fact that that two employees in the same position and with the same designed characteristics in the three aspects (skill variety, autonomy and feedback) have different levels of motivation and work effectiveness. Therefore it is necessary to include other characteristics and modulation factor in the evaluation of its association to motivation and work effectiveness (Arnold & House, 1980).

For shortcomings like this, ACT model was modified later by introducing the concept of growth need strength (INS) as a moderator to explain better the relationship between designed Job characteristics and improved motivation and work effectiveness. INS specifies the hierarchy level to which an

employee attributes his/ her such needs as self-esteem and self-actualization etc. Empirical evidence from researcher like Frye (1996) indicates that employees with high INS score achieve high levels of motivation and work effectiveness.

Thirdly, the argument does not show the weight of each characteristic on the result in improved motivation and work effectiveness. According to the ACT model, the five characteristics do not have equal influence on the result in improved motivation and work effectiveness. The following formula is proposed to evaluate their effect on motivation and work effectiveness for a given Job: $MSP = ((Skill\ variety + Task\ identity + Task\ significance)/3) \times Autonomy \times Feedback$ (Characteristics in red are missing in the argument) According to this formula, skill variety is not as important as autonomy and feedback multiplied with other factors.

But the argument fails to differentiate this aspect and seems to suggest that the three characteristics have equal weight. For example, if there is low autonomy (or feedback) in Job design, the motivating potential score will still be very low not matter how high the skill variety characteristic is. 2. 3

Critical Analysis of further issues Although with seeming correct element and containing some key characteristics under the JET model, in addition to the above pros and cons, some other factors should be taken into consideration and should be examined in a critical way in practice.

Firstly, the argument is too general to explain the different roles of some characteristics and especially their application in practice. For example, there is some controversy about feedback for the simple fact that mere

inclusion of feedback in Job design does not necessarily result in improved motivation and work effectiveness. Empirical evidences show that in one-third of cases studied, feedback was a negative factor to performance (Kluges & Denis, 1996).

Even if feedback characteristics is included in Job design, whether an employee is ready to receive the feedback and how the feedback is communicated to the employee make huge difference in its effect on motivation (or De-motivation) and performance. Secondly, the Job characteristics are not really objective dimensions. Therefore they are not easy to set in practice and are easily affected by subjectivity. Just as beauty lies in the eye of the beholder, perceptions vary much among employees for the same Job position. This huge subjectivity on Job characteristic has been shown by findings from previous researches.

Fried & Ferris (1987) states from their researches that subjective perceptions of Job characteristics are twice to three times as strong as objectives in evaluation of employees' reaction. Even for the same employee, the three characteristic dimensions in the argument are more likely different at their different career stages. Katz (1978) claims that autonomy may be a negative influence to motivation for new employees and performance while task significance is a positive one. Thirdly, there are some critiques to JET model as a whole which also applies to the argument statement.

Classical and Prefer (1978) argued that the causal ordering implied by JET model should be reversed and their needs are socially constructed in response to external stimuli. Classical and Prefer (1978) also argue that that

there is insufficient proof that individual needs of employees are stable internal constructs; but rather they should be fluctuating constructs and should reflect constant changes in response to the environmental stimuli. This indicates that the stable setting of characteristics might not be correctly based and should be dynamic. This makes its application in practice very hard.

Fourthly, about the empirical evidences from previous researches supporting the JET model, Roberts and Click (1981) suggests that many previous studies testing the JET model used the " within-person" type which is based on employees' self-reported work outcomes with their self-reported characteristics of the Job. They argue that the Job incumbents' cognitions about the heartsickness of their own Jobs may not be objective enough and the research that " person-situation" should be used where multiple individuals' reports of outcomes with the same Job.

This would make the results more objective and reliable. Fifthly, about its applications in different parts of the world, Barnum, Afar & Wong (1986) states that most of the Job characteristic research has been conducted in the US and other western societies. Due to cultural and social differences and their influence in organizational behavior, the relations between situation attributes and incumbent cognitions of attributes may differ in other societies like the East where cultures are significantly different. This also applies to the argument statement. III.

CONCLUSION In summary, there are some positive element to the argument that " Designing Jobs that meet the characteristics of skill variety, autonomy

and feedback, can result in improved motivation and work effectiveness". The contribution of the three characteristics (skill variety, autonomy and feedback) in Job design to improved motivation and work effectiveness has been identified in quite some previous researches under the ACT model. But the argument only states part of the scenario with clear limitations. Their influence on motivation and work effectiveness has to be examined with cautions.

When making evaluation on association between Job design to motivation and work effectiveness, critical analysis should be made together with all other characteristics (task identity and task significance) considered and under the organization context. Also it should be noted that for the same employee, the designed characteristics may vary for different career stages (e. G. Autonomy varies much for new employee and old ones) and also the application of this might vary from western to the east due to different culture and social backgrounds.