

# A job characteristics model psychology essay



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Hackman Oldham proposed the Job Characteristics Model, which is widely used as a framework to study how particular job characteristics impact on job outcomes, including job satisfaction. The model states that there are five core job characteristics (skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback) which impact three critical psychological states (experienced meaningfulness, experienced responsibility for outcomes, and knowledge of the actual results), in turn influencing work outcomes (job satisfaction, absenteeism, work motivation, etc.). The five core job characteristics can be combined to form a motivating potential score (MPS) for a job, which can be used as an index of how likely a job is to affect an employees attitude and behaviour.

### **These Five Core Job Characteristics are explained as:**

**Skill Variety** – The level to which the job requires multiplicity of different activities so the worker can use a number of different skills and talents.

Another way of looking at this is considering the different activities performed by an employee to carry out a job

**Task Identity** – The degree to which a job requires completion of a whole and identifiable piece of work, or related to the fact that a piece of work can be identified as having a beginning and an end. This means that the worker can look at the completed product and identify his input or part in the final product.

**Task Significances** – The degree to which the job has a substantial impact on the lives or work of the other people. This is perceived as the impact of work on the final product, other employees or the work environment.

**Autonomy** – The degree to which the job provides substantial freedom, independence and discretion to the individual in scheduling the work and determining the procedures to be used in carrying in out. It looks at the decision making process and how far is the worker allowed to improvise and make their own decisions as problems or situations develop.

**Job Feedback** – the degree to which carrying out work activities required by the job results in the individual obtaining direct and clear information about the effectiveness of his or her performance. Is there frequent and meaningful performance appraisals carried out and is the worker given clear feedback as to their performances on the job.

Jobs that are high in motivating potential must be also high on at least one of the three factors that lead to experienced meaningfulness, and also must be high on both Autonomy and 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.

**Job Satisfaction** can be defined as how contented an individual is with his or her job. Scholars and human resource professionals generally make a distinction between affective job satisfaction and cognitive job satisfaction. Affective job satisfaction is the extent of pleasurable emotional feelings individuals have about their jobs overall, and is different to cognitive job satisfaction which is the extent of individuals' satisfaction with particular facets of their jobs, such as pay, pension arrangements, working hours, and numerous other aspects of their jobs.

## **The History of Job Satisfaction**

One of the biggest preludes to the study of job satisfaction was the Hawthorne studies. These studies (1924-1933), primarily credited to Elton Mayo of the Harvard Business School, sought to find the effects of various conditions (most notably illumination) on workers' productivity. These studies ultimately showed that novel changes in work conditions temporarily increase productivity (called the Hawthorne Effect). It was later found that this increase resulted, not from the new conditions, but from the knowledge of being observed. This finding provided strong evidence that people work for purposes other than pay, which paved the way for researchers to investigate other factors in job satisfaction.

Scientific management (aka Taylorism) also had a significant impact on the study of job satisfaction. Frederick Winslow Taylor's 1911 book, *Principles of Scientific Management*, argued that there was a single best way to perform any given work task. This book contributed to a change in industrial production philosophies, causing a shift from skilled labor and piecework towards the more modern of assembly lines and hourly wages. The initial use of scientific management by industries greatly increased productivity because workers were forced to work at a faster pace. However, workers became exhausted and dissatisfied, thus leaving researchers with new questions to answer regarding job satisfaction. It should also be noted that the work of W. L. Bryan, Walter Dill Scott, and Hugo Munsterberg set the tone for Taylor's work.

Some argue that Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory, a motivation theory, laid the foundation for job satisfaction theory. This theory explains that

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people seek to satisfy five specific needs in life – physiological needs, safety needs, social needs, self-esteem needs, and self-actualization. This model served as a good basis from which early researchers could develop job satisfaction theories.

Job satisfaction can also be seen within the broader context of the range of issues which affect an individual's experience of work, or their quality of working life. Job satisfaction can be understood in terms of its relationships with other key factors, such as general well-being, stress at work, control at work, home-work interface, and working conditions.

The link between job satisfaction and job performance has a long and controversial history. Researchers were first made aware of the link between satisfaction and performance through the 1924-1933 Hawthorne studies (Naidu, 1996). Since the Hawthorne studies, numerous researchers have critically examined the idea that “ a happy worker is a productive worker”. Research results of Iaffaldano and Muchinsky (1985) have found a weak connection, approximately .17, between job satisfaction and job performance. On the other hand, research conducted by Organ (1988) discovered that a stronger connection between performance and satisfaction was not found because of the narrow definition of job performance. Organ (1988) believes that when the definition of job performance includes behaviors such as organizational citizenship (the extent to which one's voluntary support contributes to the success of an organization) the relationship between satisfaction and performance will improve. Judge, Thoreson, Bono, and Patton (2001) discovered that after correcting the sampling and measurement errors of 301 studies, the correlation between

job satisfaction and job performance increased to .30. It is important to note that the connection between job satisfaction and job performance is higher for difficult jobs than for less difficult jobs (Saari & Judge, 2004).

A link does exist between job satisfaction and job performance; however, it is not as strong as one would initially believe. The weak link may be attributed to factors such as job structure or economic conditions. For example, some jobs are designed so that a minimum level of performance is required which does not allow for high satisfaction. Additionally, in times of high unemployment, dissatisfied employees will perform well, choosing unsatisfying work over unemployment.

“ In 2006, researcher Michelle Jones analyzed three studies pulling together 74 separate investigations of job satisfaction and job performance in 12, 000 workers. She wrote: ‘ The conclusions drawn by these researchers, and many others, indicate the presence of a positive, but very weak, relationship between job satisfaction and job performance.’ Jones argues we have been measuring the wrong kind of satisfaction. Instead of job satisfaction, we should be looking at the link between overall satisfaction with life and output at work” (Bright, 2008). In this study, Jones implies that the more satisfied someone is with their life in general, the more productive we will be in our jobs.

### **Building Job Satisfaction:**

Once you have identified the blend of status, power, or intrinsic enjoyment that need to be present in your work for you to feel satisfied, you then need

to work on some of our seven ‘ ingredients’ for a satisfying job. These ingredients are:

Self-awareness.

Challenge.

Variety.

Positive attitude.

Knowing your options.

Balanced lifestyle.

A sense of purpose.

### **Self-Awareness :**

The first step in the search for job satisfaction is to know yourself. If you’re to be happy and successful, you need to understand your strengths and weaknesses. This will help you identify what types of profession will allow you to build on those strengths, and minimize those weaknesses.

### **Challenge :**

Some days you may deny it, but we all thrive on interesting challenges. Does this mean your job has to be the head of engineering at NASA? No, different things challenge different people at different times. You just need to figure out what you can do to make sure you don’t allow yourself to go stale at work.

Even if the job itself is not all that challenging, you can make it challenging.

Some great ideas here include:

Set performance standards for yourself – aim to beat your previous record, or set up a friendly competition among co-workers.

Teach others your skills – nothing is more challenging, or rewarding, than passing your skills and knowledge on to others.

Ask for new responsibilities – these will give you opportunities to stretch yourself.

Start or take on a project that uses skills you would like to use, or want to improve.

Commit to professional development – take courses, read books or trade magazines and attend seminars. However you do it, keep your skills fresh and current.

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### **Variety :**

Closely related to the need for challenge is the need to minimize boredom. Boredom is a common culprit when it comes to job dissatisfaction. When your mind is bored you lack interest and enthusiasm and even a well-matched job becomes dissatisfying. Some common methods to alleviate boredom at work include:

Cross train and learn new skills.

Ask to be moved to a new assignment or department requiring the same skills.

Ask to work a different shift.

Volunteer to take on new tasks.

Get involved with committee work.

## **Positive Attitude :**

Attitude plays a huge role in how you perceive your job and your life in general. If you are depressed, angry or frustrated, you're much less likely to be satisfied with anything. Making a change to a positive attitude is a complex process that requires a lot of work and a strong commitment. However, over time, you can turn your internal dialogues around and start to see most events in your life as positive and worthwhile. Here are some tips:

Stop negative thoughts from entering your brain.

Reframe your thoughts to the positive.

Put the events of the day in the correct context.

Don't dwell on setbacks.

Commit to viewing obstacles as challenges.

Accept that mistakes are simply opportunities to learn.

Become an optimist.

## **Know Your Options :**

When you feel trapped, you can start to get anxious. At first you wonder what else is out there for you. This progresses to the point where you become convinced that anything other than the job you're doing has got to be more satisfying. To combat this, continuously scan your environment for

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opportunities. When you feel you have options, you have more control. When you make a positive choice to stay with a job, that job has much more appeal than if you feel forced to stay because you feel you have no alternative.

Keep a list of your accomplishments.

Update your resume on a regular basis.

Keep up to date on employment trends.

Research other jobs that interest you.

### **Maintain a Balanced Lifestyle :**

You'll have heard many times that you need to keep your life and work in balance. When you focus too much on one at the expense of the other you risk putting your whole system in distress. When work takes over your life, it is easy to resent it and lose your sense of perspective: Suddenly everything about your life is clouded with negativity.

### **Find a Sense of Purpose :**

Last, but certainly not least (for many people) is the need to find a sense of purpose in the things you do. Even if you have a boring job, it helps a lot if you can see the real benefit you're providing for people.

Even the most mundane job usually has purpose if you dig deep enough. And if it doesn't, should you be wasting your life doing it?

### **Conclusion :**

Job Satisfaction has been linked to many variables, including performance, absenteeism, and turnover. Job satisfaction is significant because a

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person's attitude and beliefs may affect his or her behavior. Attitudes and beliefs may cause a person to work harder, or, the opposite may occur, and he or she may work less. Job satisfaction also affects a person's general well-being for the reason that people spend a good part of the day at work. As a result, if a person is dissatisfied with their work, this could lead to dissatisfaction in other areas of their life.