

MEASURING MOTIVATING POTENTIAL OF JOBS IN A CORPORATE HOSPITAL

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Abstract: From time immemorial, when people started understanding as to what makes them to work in personal or professional lives, attempts to understand the concept of motivation has been pursued consistently and persistently. Consequently, the popular press is replete with management literature on the employee motivation as an important behavioral dimension. Managers often state "I wish I had a highly motivated staff working for me", often ignoring the fact that the answer is very much within themselves. Contrarily there is one best way of answering is examining the motivation potential of the jobs created by the managers which is also their job responsibility. Thus, the present work attempts to explore the nuances of employee motivation in a 500 bedded large corporate hospital. To that effect, Job Characteristics theory (JCT) (Hackman and Oldham, 1976) is chosen to be one of the most suitable theories to be tested, of course partly. 208 employees representing 18 jobs responded to a standardized questionnaire which included a standardized scale that assesses the motivating potential score of the job occupied by the employees. Amazingly, the employees representing various jobs did vary significantly on all the job characteristics, besides the motivating potential score according to their job specializations. Surprisingly, some medical specializations and some non medical specializations were found to be having more motivating potential than others. Implications are drawn for managing motivation of the employees in corporate hospitals.

Introduction

Ever since the evolution of the societies, work predominated as centrality of lives of the people across the all cultures. In any society, the advanced and the non-advanced, work determines the ways of life, a pattern of interactions and a necessity for living. As it seems rewarding, it serves as a means of nurturing positive feelings and provides motivation to continue working. Work provides a major bond, through which a man is united with his fellow beings, an axis along which his pattern of life is organized in the community.

Consequently, there emerged ample of theories of work motivation. What motivates employees has been a continuous and perplexing question addressed by all those theories. As these theories are evolved, two approaches were identified to group them. They are content theories and the process theories.

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Content theories attempt to explain what exactly motivates people in general. In other words, all those theories which intend to explain the needs, motives, wants, desires that drive people towards their realization were categorized as content theories. On the other hand, the process of motivation or how exactly the motivation takes place in workplace has been the pursuit of the second line of theories called the process theories of motivation. After all of these, there is one commonality or the crux of motivation that is "work itself". Therefore, in the year 1975, Hackman and Oldham, developed a theory called job characteristics theory of motivation. A cursory view of this theory is presented later in this paper.

Motivation among Hospital Employees

As regards the motivation of employees, at least in a healthcare setting like hospitals, it is not very clear as to what motivates them to stay in such workplaces. By and large, the hospital jobs are not very much paid jobs, besides, extremely stressful as a result of handling patients who are battling between life and death every minute.

Some believe that hospital staff are either motivated or they are not and that appealing to an employee's need for material gain will not make any difference to their inherent motivation level. Monetary inducement will simply cause instrumental behaviour designed to get the reward. In health services a strong argument exists that staff are

Motivated to deliver the standards of care they have been trained to provide. As Handy (1994) puts it 'the wealth creation of a business is as worth doing and as valuable as the health creation of a hospital'.

Others think that pay plays a large part in the employee's reason for being at work and that performance will improve if a monetary reward lies at the end. A point exists to working harder if individual employees know they will gain cash or other benefits. Contrary to such contentions, this study addresses the issue that work- itself is the greatest motivator, since work occupies the central part of one's life. Therefore, the purpose of this study is threefold. Firstly, it measures the characteristics of hospital jobs. Secondly, it assesses the motivating potential of select jobs in the hospital. Thirdly, it draws implications for hospital administration.

Job Characteristics Theory

Hackman and Oldham's (1975, 1976, 1980) Job Characteristics Model (JCM) is one of the most impacting theories ever accepted and adopted in the field management of behaviours in organizations. This theory also worked as a basis for scores of studies and job redesign interventions over the past two decades, and research on this model has been extensively reviewed (Fried & Ferris 1987; Loher, Noe, Moeller & Fitzgerald, 1985; Taber & Taylor, 1990). The majority of research has supported the validity of the JCM, although critiques and modifications have been offered (Roberts & Glick, 1981; Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978).

According to the theory propounded by Hackman & Oldham (1979), any job can be described in terms of five core job dimensions namely, skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, feedback. What are these conceptually? *Skill variety* is the degree to which the job requires a variety of different activities so the worker can use a number of different skills and talents. *Task identity* is the degree to which the job requires completion of a whole and identifiable piece of work. *Task significance* is the degree to which the job has a substantial impact on the lives or work of other people. *Autonomy* is the degree to which the job provides substantial freedom, independence, and discretion to the individual in scheduling the work and in determining the procedures to be used in carrying it out. Lastly, *feedback* is 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 is said that if the first three exist in jobs, employees feel that their jobs are meaningful, important, valuable and worthwhile. Autonomy gives them a feeling of personal responsibility for the results and if job provides feedback, the employees will know how effectively they are performing.

All these five job characteristics are expected to produce three critical psychological states. The first one is the *experienced meaningfulness* – the belief that one's work is worthwhile or important. The second state is *experienced responsibility* – feeling of personal accountability for the outcomes of efforts. The third psychological state is *knowledge of results* – employees seek information about the consequences of their work effort. All these critical psychological states determine the outcomes namely work

motivation, growth satisfaction, general satisfaction and work effectiveness (McShane et.al, 2006). Loher, Noe, Moeller & Fitzgerald (1985) found that employees who have a high need for growth and who see their jobs as being high on the five core job characteristics have the most positive work outcomes.

Measurement of the motivating potential of the jobs in organizations is an important element of all in this theory. In this study an attempt is made only to measure job characteristics and the motivating potential score of all the jobs in the hospital defined by their job descriptions. In order to measure the motivating potential score (MPS) of each job, the following computation suggested by Hackman and Oldham (1976) which is utilized in this study.

$$MPS = \frac{\text{Skill variety} \times \text{Task identity} \times \text{Task Significance}}{3} \times \text{Autonomy} \times \text{Feedback}$$

Some Research Studies

In the early days of measurement of motivation, focus was on the listing of jobs. One such study was conducted by Turner and Lawrence (1965). They focused on job characteristic from 47 types of jobs for systematic research on a large scale. The study aimed to evaluate the influence of various types of jobs on employees' job satisfaction and truancy. Turner and Lawrence (1965) observe that employees prefer jobs with high complexity and challenges. They summarize requisite task attributes, including: variety, autonomy, required interaction optional interaction, knowledge and responsibility, as part of complex and challenging jobs.

Hackman and Lawler (1971), found from their research on job characteristics and job satisfaction, employees scoring higher on four items (skill variety, task identify, autonomy and feedback) can also score higher on motivation and job satisfaction. The employees scoring high on the four items above were also shown to have lower task results for the five dependent variables explored.

Steers (1977) found job characteristics to be antecedents of organizational commitment. Glisson and Durick (1988) focused on manpower service workers and found job characteristics to be closely correlated with organizational commitment, among these job

characteristics, skill variety and task identity showed the most significant influence. Hunt et al (1985) found that autonomy, variety, task identity and feedback influence the level of an employee's organizational commitment. Similarly, Ramaswami et al (1993) provided support for the direct influence of autonomy, variety and feedback on organizational commitment

Bhuiyan et al (1996) found task significance, autonomy and feedback to directly influence job satisfaction. From the research of Reiner and Zhao (1999), Bhuiyan et al (1996) found skill variety and task significance to have significant effects on job satisfaction. By and large, Research on job characteristics very consistently supports the prediction that worker satisfaction, motivation and performance are higher among individuals who see their jobs as high in the five core job characteristics (Fried & Ferris, 1986).

By and large, all of these characteristics are understood to be applicable in the hospital jobs, their extent or degree differs according to the jobs designed and performed by their incumbents. Thus, It is hypothesized that the hospital employees do not differ in their job characteristics and motivation potential score according to their specialization.

Method

This study is carried out in a private multi-specialty, 500 bedded, ISO 9000-2001 certified hospital. Involving a sample of 208 employees performing 18 jobs. A stratified disproportionate random sampling technique was adopted to select the respondents of the study. Naughton's (1988) scale to measure the job characteristics of the hospital staff is adopted. The response pattern ranged from strongly agree to strongly disagree (where strongly agree =5 and strongly disagree=1). Employees gave their ratings to the scale items tapping essence of the job characteristics. Items on each sub-scale meant for the five characteristics were averaged to obtain a summary score for each of the five job characteristics. Item details are presented in table 1. The five job characteristic measures were then summed to form an Additive Motivating Potential Score (AMPS) for each subject (Dunham, 1976; Oldham et al., 1986) according to the MPS formula.

Details about the job characteristics, number of items, scale reliabilities are reported in table 1. Alpha coefficients reveal that the scales items used to measure job characteristics are highly reliable and internally consistent.

TABLE 1
DETAILS ABOUT THE SCALES AND THE ITEMS

Sno.	Job Characteristics	Conceptualization	Items	Alpha Coefficients
1	Skill variety	degree to which the employees have the scope of using different skills and talents to complete a variety of work activities	6	.66
2	Task identity	Degree to which a job requires completion of a whole or identifiable piece of work, such as doing something from beginning to end.	3	.60
3	Task significance	Degree to which the job has a substantial impact on the organization.	3	.45
4	Autonomy	Degree of employees has freedom in scheduling the work, determining the procedures and the methods of work.	6	.56
5	Feedback	Degree to which employees can tell how well they are doing based on direct reports from the work itself.	2	.42

Results and Discussion

It was hypothesized that the hospital employees do not differ in their job characteristics and motivation potential score according to their specialization. Results with regard to the testing of this hypothesis are presented in the following sections.

Table 2 shows the distribution of mean scores and motivating potential score of 18 jobs of the incumbents on skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, feedback. With regard to skill variety, it is clear that hospital engineers scored higher mean score (22.33) followed by technicians and physicians (21.50), assistants (20.64) and executives (20.16). The waiters have scored the least on skill variety (11.00). Interestingly, the f-value shows that the respondents significantly differ in their score on skill variety scale. Thus, it could be said that the jobs of these people require a variety of different activities to be performed.

TABLE 2
MEAN SCORES AND F-VALUES OF THE JOB CHARACTERISTICS AND MPS

Sno	Incumbents	Skill Variety	Task Identity	Task Significance	Autonomy	Feedback	MPS
		Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean
1	Driver	12.7	11.0	9.5	14.0	6.2	302.5
2	Supervisor	18.0	10.0	13.0	20.0	7.0	634.6
3	Waiter	11.0	10.0	6.0	15.0	6.0	201.0
4	Housekeepers	15.6	9.2	9.6	15.0	7.0	363.6
5	Dieticians	18.0	11.0	14.5	20.0	8.0	802.3
6	Stenos	20.0	10.0	13.7	24.2	8.2	944.5
7	Cooks	12.3	11.6	6.6	16.3	9.0	344.0

8	Cashiers	18.5	9.0	10.7	23.5	7.0	615.5
9	Assistants	20.6	10.2	11.8	23.0	8.1	788.0
10	Executives	20.1	8.1	11.6	20.8	7.3	618.3
11	Nurse	17.5	9.4	11.1	17.0	7.1	482.6
12	Doctors	19.3	9.3	12.7	22.4	7.6	789.4
13	Data Entry Operator	21.5	9.0	13.0	19.5	6.5	593.8
14	Physiotherapists	21.5	9.5	13.0	23.5	8.0	845.6
15	Front office Assistants	17.8	10.2	10.8	14.6	6.0	358.2
16	Maintenance Operators	16.3	10.0	11.3	16.3	8.6	557.8
17	Engineers	22.3	8.0	12.3	22.0	7.0	700.2
18	Technicians	21.5	9.2	13.2	22.2	7.2	754.6
19	F _{value} d.f (16,190)	6.57**	.77	5.33**	5.38**	2.08*	5.06**

N=190, P=**.0000, * .01.

On task identity, cooks scored highest mean score (11.66) followed by dietitian and ambulance driver (11.00), front officers and assistants (10.20). Interestingly, the engineers scored the least (8.00). This means, the total jobs of these people need to be completed by themselves only, whereas it is not so in case of engineers' jobs. However, the f-value shows that the respondents do not differ significantly in their score on task identity scale which is evident from the f-value. One can easily understand the nature of job of cooks in a hospital. They experience fair amount of sense of identity with the jobs they done on a day to day bases as they feed large number of people many times a day. Therefore, every time, they prepare a meal, they feel the sense of completion and also meaningfulness in their completed work. Followed by the dietitians who also experience sense of identity with what they do in their jobs. They also feel that their work is complete unlike others in the hospital. Therefore the other staff is relatively less on task identity since everybody does a little contribution to the recovery of the patients.

With regard to task significance, dietitians scored the highest mean score of 14.50 followed by stenographers (13.72), supervisors and data entry operators and physicians with a mean score of 13.00. Interestingly, the f-value shows that the respondents significantly differ in their score on task significance scale.

On autonomy dimension, stenographers scored the highest mean (24.25) followed by physicians and cashier (23.50), assistants (23.00) and technicians (22.25). Surprisingly, front

officers and ambulance drivers scored the least. Interestingly, the f-value shows that the respondents significantly differ in their score on autonomy scale.

On feedback, maintenance staff scored highest mean of 8.66 followed by stenographers (8.25), assistants (8.10), physicians (8.00) and dietitians (8.00). Waiters and front officers scored the least. Interestingly, the f-value shows that the respondents significantly differ in their score on feedback scale.

Lastly, with regard to motivating potential of the jobs, it is interesting to note that the top five jobs of doctors, nurses, technicians, assistants, and executives jobs have greater motivating potential. The last five with least motivating potential are waiters, cooks, data entry operators, drivers and dietitians, which are evident from the scores presented in table 2. Interestingly, the f-value also reveals that such differences in their MPS are statistically significant.

In conclusion, it could be stated that all the hospital staff have significantly varied on all the characteristics of the job except on task identity. This is very surprising. What does it convey from the hospital context and from the perspective of each individual's contribution towards the recovery process of the patients therein. This issue needs to be discussed in the light of the meaning of the 'task identity'. It was conceptualized as "degree to which a job requires completion of a whole or identifiable piece of work, such as doing something from beginning to end." When asked about completion of work from the beginning to end is not possible in any type of work in a hospital context since every staff member does job which is only a single portion of a whole job. The recovery of an ailing patient is not merely contributed by the doctors and the nurses alone, it is the unified efforts of eighteen staff which is a minimum. By and large, the objective of patient recovery and ensuring better quality of life for a patient is not the job of either one or two staff members, but by more than 25 people quite likely in a full fledged hospital with requisite number of staff and the technologies employed.

Implications for Hospital Administrators

Specific guidelines could be offered to redesign jobs. Such easily implementable guidelines make the job design area popular and practical for more effective human resource management. Some of the following guidelines for practice could be followed. Skill variety can be ensured by providing training and re-training to the employees in cross functional areas, though such attempts may be acceptable from the perspective of hospital functional protocols. In many clinical and medical specializations, such attempts are not valid, but in some Para-medical and non-medical area of work, such attempts may be worth attempting at. Another issue is that jobs that expand duties require more skills on the part of employees. Thus, training in functional areas is a pre-requisite for ensuring skill variety. Task Identity could be promoted by giving projects to the employees or specially form work modules for each of them. However, it is suggested that the trend of staff members responding to this dimension is invariant. In other words, it means that they realize that they do not state that they does the job complete from the beginning to the end, owing to the peculiar nature of the business process in a hospital context. The process of patient recovery is a driven by unitary effort of all staff members rather than individual specific, therefore, this trend implies that there is a better scope for building teamwork systems as opposed to the individual focused or centered work systems which occurs in non-service organizations. As regards task significance, it could be made possible when the importance of the job is communicated to the employees and further by taking steps to enhance image of the organization. Further in case of autonomy to be ensured, employees need to be empowered to make decisions in their work areas instead of waiting for the supervisors to come for their rescue. Further, by giving more responsibility and accountability, employees may not misuse their autonomy. Feedback is very important, it could be ensured by implementing information systems. On the other hand, supervisors give objective, and immediate information to the employees on their performance. This way the employees' jobs in the hospital can be meaningful, cheerful and potentially motivating for all the job occupants.

Conclusion

Assessment of motivating potential of the jobs in hospital is a pre-requisite for re-designing the work systems that promise greater productivity in the hospitals. This study reported that on skill variety, hospital engineers scored higher mean score. Whereas on task identity, cooks scored highest mean score. With regard to task

significance, dietitians scored the highest mean score. On autonomy, stenographers scored the highest mean whereas, on feedback, maintenance staff scored highest mean.

Except on task identity, on all the other job characteristics, the hospital employees significantly differed in their perception. Thus, the hypothesis that "hospital employees may differ in their job characteristics and MPS according to their specialization" has received strong support in this study.

Lastly, with regard to motivating potential of the jobs, it is interesting to note that the top five jobs of doctors, nurses, technicians, assistants, and executives jobs have greater motivating potential. Implications are drawn for hospital administrators.

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