

Job Characteristic Theory Of Motivation: An Organizational Culture Perspective

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Abstract

Most theories of work motivation overlook the effect of culture on the motivational potential of various managerial and motivational approaches. The theoretical model proposed in this study will look at the motivational process suggested in job characteristics theory (JCT) of Hackman & Oldham through a prism of culture. Specifically two dimensions of culture: collectivism/ individualism and power distance dimensions of culture are discussed with JCT of motivation. As Job Characteristic Model is based on an individualistic approach, to make it flexible and adaptive for collectivistic cultures, it is suggested that JCT needs to be extended to address different cultural impacts on employee attitudes and behaviors. Future directions are discussed to test the model empirically.

Introduction

Motivation has been an important phenomenon in organizational studies and has been extensively studied to describe employees' behaviours. It has been visualized as eagerness of employees to achieve certain individual and organizational objectives. Mostly it has been defined as inputs that activate direct and uphold progress towards required behaviours. (Campbell & Pritchard, 1976; Pinder, 1998). It has been investigated that many personal (Raja et al, 2004), contextual and cultural factors (Hofstede, 1984) play important role in motivating employees at workplace. There have been many approaches and practices for work motivation. Organization Behavior research has incorporated many need based, cognitive and contingency theories of motivation to explain the employees' arousal to achieve certain goals. But the basic mechanism of motivation has been expressed universally (Triandis, 1994) but it is a recognized fact now that culture has a significant relationship with culture. (Aycan, 2001; Yu & Yang, 1994). This fact has opened a potential avenue to study motivation in cultural context at different levels. This is particularly more important for transnational organizations putting their efforts to attain the required level of employee motivation.

Job design is one of the approach for motivating employees. It has been investigated as a useful practice to change employees behavior in a required direction. The basic premise of Job design or Job characteristics theory is that by enriching job with few effective characteristics, employees get more motivated and satisfied with their jobs (Hackman & Oldham, 1975). This theory got reasonable attention in organizational behavior studies and was studied with many outcome variables. But there is still a rare evidence of relationship between job characteristic and other organizational factors (Coelho, 2008) related .

Many researchers studied Job characteristic model of Hackman and Oldham (1975) and found significant moderators that play a role in job characteristics and employees attitudes relationship. Ferris & Gilmore, (1984) found that work context is an important moderator in JCT Model. Whereas Locus of control (Lim & Teo, 1998), affinity for informal group

formation (Lee-Ross, 1999) and growth need strength GNS (Hackman & Oldham, 1975) have been proved as significant moderators of this model.

Lee Ross, (2005) further suggested that cultural or ethnic factors should be studied with job characteristic model. So it is aimed to explain job characteristic theory in a cultural perspective. Employee motivation is a concern of micro OB and culture is of macro OB. It is tried to integrate these constructs in this study as there is a growing trend and need to integrate micro and macro OB level constructs. Capelli and Sherer (1991) also suggested this integration of micro and macro level work context. It is argued in this paper that motivational theories particularly job characteristic theory of motivation must be investigated in contextual factor. Because to utilize the motivation practice effectively, it is very important to study how culture play a role in making it effective. A few comparative analysis has been done about different types of motivation practice could be suitable for a particular culture. But JCT in cultural perspective has not been studied extensively for different cultural dimensions. So it is proposed that JCT needs to be extended in such a way that it should address different cultural perspectives that moderates the job characteristics and motivation relationship. The particular objective of the paper is to investigate role two dimensions of culture, specifically "Individualism/ collectivism" and "power distance" in job characteristics and perceived work motivation. It is further explained how JCT can be used in aforementioned two cultural perspectives Sequence of the paper is: the concept of motivation is explained in the first section, then job characteristic theory of Hackman and Oldham is explained with the moderators studied so far. Cultural impact on motivational process is discussed. Different dimensions of culture are described broadly and the selection of two cultural dimensions i.e. "individualism/ collectivism", and "power distance" for this particular paper is discussed. Then JCT is explained with these two dimensions of culture.

Literature Review

Motivation

Research is evident that motivated employees are key source of personal and organizational success. Pfeffer (1998) found that enduring success is extensively related to the way organizations manage their employees. In other words, to nurture the organizational success and effectiveness, it is very important to make their work more meaningful and maintain their alleviated spirits towards their work accomplishments.

Work motivation is not an isolated and simple phenomenon but a multidimensional and broad notion that is related to the mechanism, how workers interact and visualize their organization and is how much he/she feel a relation, obligation and reward while serving for that organization (Allen & Meyer, 1990). There could be many internal and external factors that impact motivation. Locke and Latham's explanation indicates the wide scope of work motivation: "The concept of motivation refers to internal factors that impel action and to external factors that can act as inducements to action" (2004 :388). Motivation can be operationalized as having impact on many employee attitudes like job satisfaction, commitment and job involvement (Oldham and Cummings, 1996). Locke's (1997) presented an analysis of motivation theories and aforementioned work outcomes and found that these outcomes are very important to discuss the concept of work motivation in organizational context.

Lock (1976) described Job satisfaction as pleasant "emotional state" develops when employee evaluate his/her job or work experience. Employee commitment includes a loyalty and implicit felt duty towards the organization (Allen & Meyer, 1990). It has also been observed that Organizational commitment play more significant role in motivating employees to work for group or organizational goals achievement than individual goals (Ellemers, Gilder &

Heuvel, 1998). Job involvement means that upto what extent an organization contributes to employee's self image (Lodahl & Kejner, 1965) and satisfies imperative needs (Dubin, 1956, 1968). Following Locke and Latham conceptualization of motivation, in this particular study the broader scope of motivation is employed. This conceptualization of motivation, include internal and external aspects that make the employee more motivated, satisfied and committed to the role other than the specific motivation techniques. It has been found that motivation can be connected to other outcomes like job satisfaction, commitment, involvement, and turnover etc (Moynihan & Pandey, 2007).

Job Characteristic Theory (JCT):

- Literature indicates that job design has been investigated as significant predictor of employees' intrinsic/implicit motivation and creativity (Amabile, 1988; Hackman & Oldham, 1980; Kanter, 1988; West & Farr, 1989). Hackman and Oldham's (1976, 1980) Job Characteristics Theory (JCT) has been in main focus in job design research. This theory highlights the significance of five job characteristics (skill variety, task identity, task significance, feedback, and autonomy) in inducing "psychological states" that turn into individual and organizational outcomes like high job satisfaction, motivation and organizational commitment). Particularly enriched jobs in terms of high autonomy, more skill variety, task identity, task significance and job feedback improve level of motivation and satisfaction in employees. These characteristics develop three cognitive states which are called as "experienced meaningfulness", "experienced responsibility" and "knowledge of results". These responses produce intrinsic or internal work motivation which is also related to job satisfaction and commitment.
- Hackman and Oldham (1975) also explained the specific motivating potential Index of each job dimension on the basis of job-related content variables. They further elaborated that jobs which have low Motivating Potential Score fails to effectively motivate the worker unless the employee has low Growth Need Strength.

Moderators of JCT

- Research is evident of many variables that have been investigated as moderators of Job characteristic model of Hackman and Oldham(1975). Growth need strength has been treated as moderator between job characteristics and internal work motivation(). Further studies indicated that work context (Ferris & Gilmore, 1984), locus of control (Lim & Teo, 1998), affinity for informal group formation (Lee-Ross, 1999) are significant moderators of Job characteristic and motivation relationship. These moderations results indicated that Job characteristics model need to be discussed with some other potential variables. Lee Ross(2004) recommended that ethnicity and cultural variables would be significant moderators of Job Characteristics Model. These kind of investigations will reveal value able results and JCM will become more adaptable motivational research and practice in international organizations and the work places where cross cultural workers are working.

Extension of JCT

- Keeping in view the fact that if organizations want to be successful in global and transnational business market, they have to employ practices that facilitate workers to work together for organizational objectives. There is an acknowledged trend of employing work groups or teams like self-managed work teams, virtual teams, team-based organizations etc. (Frankforter & Christensen, 2005; Muthusamy, Wheeler, & Simmons, 2005) in organizations.
- Increased demand on product/service quality, employee and customer satisfaction could be justification of growing trend of self-managed teams (Chansler, Swamidass, & Cammann, 2003). Organization's success also depends on effectiveness of work groups/teams, therefore

its very important to know how these teams/groups become more effective in organizations. It has been identified that JCT is an approach of individual motivation. To make it more useful and helpful in different settings, a need is identified to extend it for group motivation. Strubler and York (2007) suggested an extension of Job characteristic model for the work groups as a work group Design. They investigated relationship between team/group work characteristics and team/group members perceptions of their participation in organizational and work outcomes. Extending Hackman and Oldham's Job characteristic model (1975), they proposed a team characteristic model of work group/team design and suggested that this design should identify work group/team dimensions or characteristics which are related to desired work outcomes like high levels of motivation, job satisfaction and commitment.

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- **Culture:**
- Hofstede(1980) defined culture as the collective mental programming that differentiate the members of one group from others. Pettigrew proposed that culture shape up shared concepts like symbols, language, rituals etc.,(1979). A cultural approach has been explained as sharing similar beliefs, customs, norms and 'mental programming' (Brislin et al., 1973; Hofstede, 2002). Hofstede, (1991, 2001) explained five cultural dimensions: (1) "Power Distance", explains the acceptance of unequal distribution of power and authority; (2) "Uncertainty Avoidance", is concerned with the level of avoiding uncertainties; (3) "Individualism versus Collectivism", related to the integration of individuals into primary groups; (4) "Masculinity versus Femininity", related to the segregation of emotional roles between women and men in the society; (5) "Long Term versus Short Term Orientation", is explained as people's main focus of the efforts: the future or the present and past. Another important work, undertaken by House et al (1991) in 1994-1997, analysed data collected from 17,000 managers in nearly 1,000 domestic companies from 60 countries of the world. House et al., (2004) described their Globe project as a replicate of land mark study of Hofstede's (1980) and extended by investigating the relationship between societal-level variables, organizational practices, and leader attributes and behavior. GLOBE expanded conceptually the five Hofstede dimensions to nine. The two new dimensions are: Humane Orientation and Performance Orientation.

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- **Organizational Culture**
- Organizational culture has been defined as in-depth structure of organization which is based on employees' shared values, beliefs, and practices (Denison, 1996). Although scholars have described conceptualization of organizational culture commonly but identified differentiated dimensions (Rousseau, 1990), and explicitly distinguished two main expressions "values" and "activities/behaviors" (Rousseau, 1990). Hofstede et al., (1990) identified six cultural elements that provided a framework to analyse and study .But there was a criticism on generalizability of these dimensions for being studied in two countries organization cultures. The six dimensions were: "Process-oriented v results-oriented", "Job-oriented v employee-oriented", Professional v parochial, Open systems v closed systems, Tight v loose control, Pragmatic v normative. Although there are different sets of organizational culture dimensions are established, but most of the studies used general culture dimensions to study organizational culture. But Hofstede,2001 and few other researchers explained that societal cultural values have must strong impact on human unconscious values and people translate and exhibit their societal cultural values in their workplaces.
- Globe cultural elements are perceived for both the organization and national cultures (Hofstede, 2006) .Therefore organizational culture can be studied using dimensions of societal or national cultures. Hofstede(1980) argued that Individualism and collectivism would be an important element of organizational culture with a strong justification that

organizations are embedded in societies and social culture has a significant impact on organizational culture.,

- To evaluate meaning and application of various motivational techniques, Hofstede's two dimensions : collectivism/Individualism and Power distance are more appropriate to be studied(Hofstede,1984). Therefore Hofstede's framework has been adapted and focused on collectivism/individualism and power distance in this study.

Motivation and Culture

- Triandis (1977) explained culture as a subjective context that shapes up one's reaction to the human fabricated environment or the way how group of people respond to different situations and practices. The research is evident that how employees' attitudes like motivation, commitment, and satisfaction are being effected by their personal attributes as well as their work environment. It is also suggested that a motivational model should be accommodative to fulfil need of individual and work context constructs (Moynihan & Pandey, 2007). Wright et al, (2001) differentiated job characteristics and organizational characteristics. Former explains the attributes of job and later explains the attributes of the environment where employee performs their jobs (2001). They further identified that organizational factors exert a notable impact on employees' attitudes through job characteristics. The basic premise of motivation could be universal (Triandis, 1994), the link between culture and motivation is also recognized (Aycan, 2001). This basic relationship reveals the main conceptualization of subject context (described as national level, and organizational level) which is very significant for motivation research. It is more important for multi cultural organizations where they have to motivate their multi cultural employees for a better performance.

- A conclusive feature from the research evidence is that culture is one of several important components influencing workplace motivation (Munro et al., 1997). Furnham et al. (1994), found that culture and stage of economic development are important factors in intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Kanfer (1992) particularly proposed three arenas to organize motivation theory including: personality based, decision choice and goal/self-regulation. The personality-based area is strongly and directly related to culture because of the culture– values–personality relation (Hofstede, 1997). The wrong match between motivation strategy and culture can be detrimental for motivation and in turn productivity of the organization. So management has to seek a best match between culture and psychology values of their work force and the motivational strategy applied on them to achieve best outcomes.

Moderating Role of Culture Characteristics in JCT:

- Different motivational theories have been studied in a cultural frame work, but JCT has little evidence to be studied in this perspective. Lee-Ross (2005) performed a pioneer work and adapted Hackman and Oldham's (1975) job characteristics model and studied cultural impact (masculinity) in hospitality organizations in Australia and Mauritius. Brislin et al, (1997) established empirical work on motivation in Japanese context in which they studied the two dimensions particularly individualism/collectivism and the guilt/shame factors, revealed that Japanese employees were more concerned and sensitive to self-criticism (ashamed to accept personal praise) in contrast to self-enhancement (willing to accept personal praise) that is more common in west and USA (Kitayama et al., 1997).
- Coelho and Augusto (2008) studied role of some cultural variables and found that job characteristics are related to organizational factors to enhance positive attitudes and behaviors in a better manner.

- **Proposed Model**

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On the basis of job characteristics and motivation established relationship, It is argued that not only job dimensions but culture also shapes the critical psychological states that leads to motivation. It means that the critical psychological states (Experienced meaningfulness, experienced responsibility and knowledge of result) (Hackman and Oldham,1975) do not depend only on the core job dimensions but culture shape these cognitive states that in turn impact on the work motivation. Employees perceive the job dimensions differently due to their belongingness to particular cultural values and then behave differently. It can be observed how job characteristics are related to cultural variables to enhance positive employee attitudes and behaviours in more different ways (Coelho & Augusto, 2008), depending on their cultural values. An individual's behavior is dependent on the cultural values he holds. Different cultural values create different perceptions about the same phenomenon.

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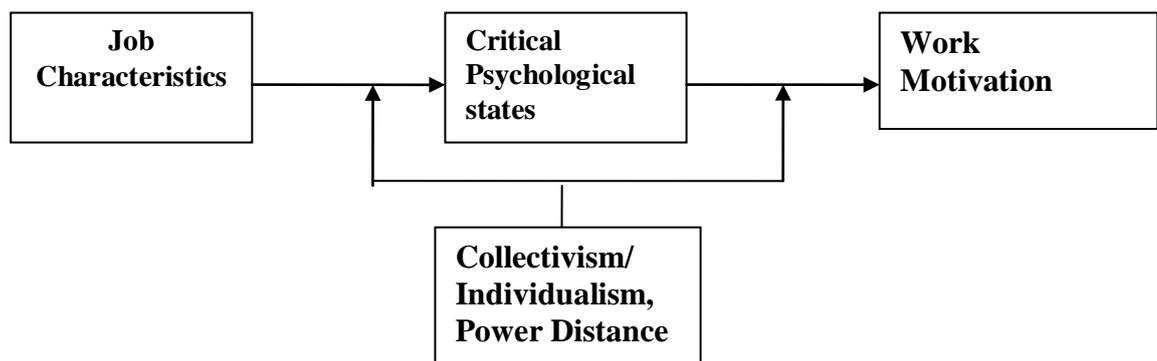
Hypothesis 1: There is a relationship between job characteristics and motivation.

- ***Hypothesis 2: Culture moderates the relationship between Job characteristics and employees motivation.***

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Same jobs are perceived differently in different cultures. In the same way there could be different level of psychological states of the same job characteristics if individuals belong to different cultural backgrounds. So it is very important to device the job characteristics for specific cultures to achieve required level of motivation. Job autonomy may be required in individualistic culture more.

- The development of individual job-enrichment in the America, autonomous work groups in North Europe, and Quality Control Circles in Japan show a clear distinction of their cultures and best suited practices. It explains that particular cultures promote specific motivational strategies and practices. Culture can be regarded as an important criteria or prism to appraise the appropriate motivational strategy and practice (Earley & Erez, 1997). That is a strong reason that individual job characteristics are more appropriate for individual self (like US) and Quality circles type of practices appropriate with the values of groupism, and provide opportunities for the satisfaction of the interdependent- self.



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Fig 1: Moderating role of Organizational culture in JCT

- On the basis of this theoretical support, I have adapted Hofstede's two dimensions of culture which have been discussed in literature for both organizational culture and national culture

specifically in relation to motivation. To evaluate meaning of various motivational techniques, Hofstede's two dimensions of collectivism and power distance have been most related (Erez, 1997).

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- **Individualism/Collectivism**

- Collectivism versus individualism has been taken as organizational culture dimension while studying the effect of demographic description and organizational culture on work processes and outcomes (Chatman, 1998). Most of the variance across cultures has been explained through Collectivism (Triandis, 1994). It is concerned to societies, where people are integrated into strong and cohesive in-groups, have been protecting people throughout their life in exchange of obedient loyalty. Individualism, in contrast are concerned with the loose bonding among people and they are more concerned about their self and their immediate families (Hofstede, 1991). These cultural attributes are significant for evaluating the impact of individual versus team-based motivational techniques.

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- ***Hypothesis 3: Collectivism will moderate relationship between Individual job characteristics and motivation relationship in such a way that relationship will be weaker when employees are high in collectivism.***

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- **Power Distance:**

- Power distance has been explained as the expectation and acceptance of unequal distribution of power and authority by ordinary people. (Hofstede, 1991). People in low-power distance societies are more democratic and like more autonomy and independence like autonomy in their jobs, where as people belong to hi-power distance societies accept power inequalities and don't concern with the autonomy of their jobs and accept directive style of leadership.

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- ***Hypothesis 4: Power Distance will moderate relationship between Individual job characteristics and motivation relationship in such a way that relationship will be weaker when employees are high in power distance.***

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- As culture gives shape to the self that moderates the motivational practices-employee behavior link. This self synthesizes the critical psychological states in JCT. It is hypothesized that culture inherent an impact on self that translate job characteristics to critical psychological states differently and effectiveness of individual job characteristics proposed by Hackman and Oldham(1975) is based on collectivism/individualism and power distance values level of employees.

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- **Discussion:**

- The basic idea of the paper can be summarized as the management activities that motivate workers in one particular type of culture would not be equally effective in motivating workers in a society with different cultural values.

- Individualistic Culture and JCT As JCT by Hackman & Oldham basically addresses the individual's motivation so it is best suited practice in individualistic cultures where individuals think about their personal satisfaction, growth and achievement. The basic and original model of of Job characteristics was based on US (individualistics) with a main focus of individual worker (Hackman & Oldham 1980), and it was further proposed that team/group work cannot be used in this society for self enhancement. and team work was not recommended as a means for self enhancement. For individuals job autonomy is more meaningful and create more intrinsic motivation that give more satisfaction to their self. The

reasons for the lack of success of some practices like Quality Control Circles (which are successful in collectivistic cultures like Japan) in the U.S. is that they are high in individualism. were explained (Lawler, 1994). Studies on group/team performance in the United States (individualistic society) have indicated that employees performing in groups could not effectively work as compared to their performance in working alone (Gabrenya, Latane, & Wang, 1983). This performance loss was not observed in collectivistic societies such as China and Israel (Earley, 1989, 1993; Earley & Erez, 1997). Collectivistic culture requires practices and techniques that motivate the work groups as people prefer to work in groups in collectivistic cultures. So JCT needs to be in an extended form for group motivation. An extension of Job characteristic model for the work groups as a work group Design has been suggested with name of team characteristics model with description of five job characteristics have been defined for groups (Strubler & York, 2007). But to make the job design equally useful for work groups and collectivistic cultures, it is very important to follow a model of job design for work groups. So an extended model of job design for teams can be used for collectivistic cultural settings.

Conclusion and Future Directions:

- The culture based model of Job Characteristics Theory of motivation provides as a valuable conceptual model to evaluate the motivation potential of this approach in different cultures. The proposed framework explains the relationship between culture, self (to shape critical psychological states), motivational process, and employee attitudes.

- When motivational techniques are inconsistent with the organizational or departmental culture, they are likely to violate the employee's internal motive of self-consistency. Therefore, motivational practices which are incongruent with the cultural values are less likely to have a positive motivational effect on employees' performance and behavior. Therefore, a motivational technique that satisfies the horizontal independent self construal in an egalitarian individualistic culture will not be effective for satisfying the vertical independent self or the horizontal and vertical interdependent self construal in collectivistic cultures. A motivational technique that pushes authority down and allows for personal or team responsibility, will be appreciated in cultures of low power distance, but not in cultures of high power distance, where employees expect their superior to take the lead. A culture based approach to work motivation, takes into consideration the cultural values that serve for evaluating the meaning of the motivational techniques. What motivate people is influenced by culture.

This suggested model can provide an avenue for the future research. This particular theory of Job Characteristic and other theories of motivation can be studied in a cultural framework. Different dimensions of culture can be taken to derive a more conclusive impact of culture on motivation. As scales are available to measure collectivism/individualism of employees (Robert & Wasti, 2002), so can help to estimate its impact on different practices empirically.

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