

Zahra Masood Bhutta

Pakistan

Hina Ali

Pakistan

Salahuddin Bhutto

Pakistan

Job Design in Career Context: Empirical Evidence from Higher Educational Institutes

DOI: 10.15804/tner.2020.60.2.05

Abstract

The present study focuses the Fried et al. (2007) conceptual framework which examines the impact of job characteristics on employees' satisfaction and how career stage and career advancement moderates these effects. The sample for the study consists of 250 faculty members teaching in different universities in China. Results revealed that current career stage does not act as a moderator between job characteristics and job satisfaction, but career advancement acts as a moderator between job characteristics and job satisfaction which somewhat contradicts the findings of the original model of Fried et al. (2007).

Keywords: Job Characteristics, Career Stage, Career Advancement, Job Satisfaction

Introduction

Higher Education in China has played a very significant role as indicated by the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, in the financial development of the nation, and in scientific advancement and modernization of social improvement in the nation, by boosting the abilities of specialists (Zhou & Vaccaro, 2007). According to recent studies, China stands as the third country in the world which is an inspiring educational destination for foreign students. Bearing in mind the popularity of institutions, teachers are one of the most impor-

tant components behind this. If the teachers are satisfied with their profession and work environment, it has a strong effect on their efficiency and competence, because the environment for teaching and learning is more conducive (Shen et al., 2012; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011). One way to improve the efficiency of teachers is to work on their job design. To obtain desired results and purposes, organizations and institutions should make their job designs more accountable (Kanungo, 1994; Edginton, 2001; Al-Alawi, 2005; Robins and Coulter, 2010). Job Design Theory addresses the different purposes of human resource management, which are to enhance employee satisfaction, improve quality of work and also improve employee motivation (Proctor & Van Zandt, 2018).

Application of Job Design Theory in educational setting is very important because of its multiplicity in every position. Several theories have been brought into management discipline to improve employee satisfaction and motivation. The moderation model of this study is a precise version of the Fried et al., (2007) framework in which the proposed hypotheses have been empirically tested on academics of the higher education sector.

Research on Job Design Theory has ignored career impact as an important factor although 'Career' is perceived as an important and fundamental dimension of context, keeping in view the situational constraints and current opportunities in the current time of high globalization and the dynamic changes related with it (Fried et al., 2007; Johns, 2006). 'Career' is progressively being perceived as a basic variable that ought to be included in hypotheses of frames of mind and practices in work (George & Jones, 2000; McGrath & Tschan, 2004). The failure to incorporate a career perspective in Job Design Theory may confine the theory's capacity to precisely anticipate singular mentalities and practices in associations, which are affected by situations that have occurred before, are happening at present, and may happen later on (George & Jones, 2000; McGrath & Tschan, 2004). Unfortunately, research in Job Design Theory is static in nature and fails to fuse in time, in this way lessening the prescient force and utility of job qualities (George & Jones, 2000).

This study will explore three job motivating characteristics that create attitudinal reactions in educational sector employees in China. We have not explored the impact of feedback and autonomy on job satisfaction, as some researchers believe that it is impossible to measure the strength of teaching paradigms until and unless people are aware of the components of effective teaching and feedback of students (Monroe & Borzi, 1989; Spencer, 1992).

Fried et al., (2007) proposed that researchers should consider career stages and career advancement expectations of employees. So this article aims to explore

Job Design Theory in terms of inspiring characteristics that give rise to certain opinions, by inculcating certain perspectives in employees' careers. This study aims to see the effect of Skill Variety, Task Identity and Task Significance on the satisfaction of Chinese teachers, based on their future expectations of advancement in their careers and their current career stage. The moderation model of this study is a precise version of the Fried et al., (2007) framework in which the proposed hypotheses have been empirically tested on the academics from the higher education sector.

The foremost purpose of this study is to investigate the effects of job inspiring characteristics on attitudinal outcomes of workers with the moderation effect of current stage of career and expected career advancement.

According to Hackman and Oldham (1975; 1980) motivation of employees can be improved by enhancing job characteristics. Similarly Morgeson & Campion, (2002; 2003) argue that if a job consists of challenging tasks, variety, task significance and task identity it will satisfy employees to a greater extent. Empirical investigations (Ghiselli, 2016; Ghosh et al., 2015) also show that challenging jobs require employees to engage and use different skills and that they result in positive attitude and behavioral outcomes. Therefore, it can be theorized that employees will consider their job satisfactory if it contains motivational job characteristics such as skill variety, task identity and task significance:

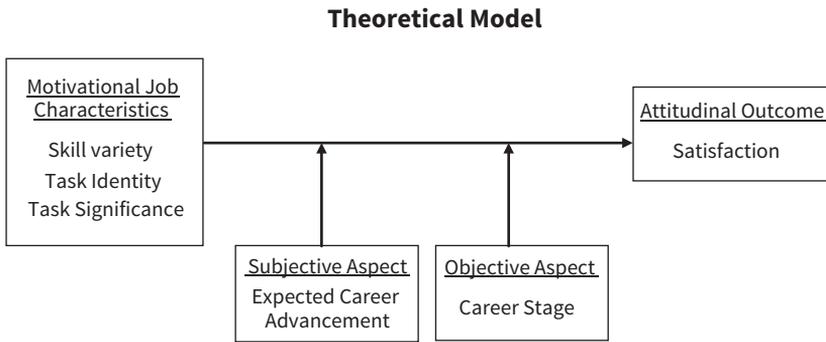
H1: There is significant relationship between motivational job characteristics and satisfaction.

According to career theory, individuals' greatest need is professional development, therefore, employees develop competences at every career stage which lead them to satisfaction. The incorporation of subjective (relativistic) and objective (absolute) career aspects into Job Design Theory and research has been limited and needs further exploration (Fried et al., 2007). 'Subjective' refers to expected career advancement, or future occupational advancement, whereas, 'objective' reflects the current or existing career stage. According to Kanungo (1982), the more the job characteristics and work situation meet employees' psychological needs, the more they identify with and become involved in their work. Among other psychological needs for employees' career advancement and stable career stages are the basics ones. Despite calls in the literature (Filaherty and Pappas, 2000; 2002a; 2000b), no study has examined the plausible moderator role of job characteristics in job satisfaction (Bulent and Shahid, 2004). Additionally, Hauff et al. (2015) have identified career advancement in existent literature, as one of

the important components of job satisfaction, and it is positively and significantly associated with job satisfaction. Thus it can be assumed that:

H2: Expected Career Advancement moderates the relationship between Job motivational characteristics and Satisfaction

H3: Career Stage moderates the relationship between Job motivational characteristics and Satisfaction.



Research Methodology

This study predicts the impact of stimulating job characteristics in improving employee’s satisfaction considering their expected career advancement and career stage, using cross sectional data. In keeping with the research objectives, the target population is teachers working in higher educational institutes. Convenience sampling was used to obtain the desired data from 250 teachers working in universities in China.

All the variables in the present study were based on an instrument with a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (extremely dissatisfied) to 5 (strongly satisfied). To measure the job characteristics, a total of 13 items from the Job Diagnostic Survey (JDS) was used to assess the three job characteristics (Hackman & Oldham, 1980). Skill variety was measured using a 5-item scale ($\alpha=.769$); task significance was measured using a 4-item scale ($\alpha=.689$); task identity was measured with 4-items ($\alpha=.526$). Job satisfaction was measured using 11 items (Hackman & Oldham, 1974).

Data Collection and Analysis

A survey questionnaire was adapted to collect the data. Data was entered using SPSS version 20 for analysis using Correlation and Regression to test moderation effects. Before proceeding further, normality was checked. It was found that the data was normally distributed, and that skewness and kurtosis both fall in the respective threshold value (which is <3 and <0), and provided a bell-shaped graph, which suggested that the data was without any issues as regards normality.

Results and Findings

Correlation

Results reported in Table 1 show that the highest correlation exists between Task Identity and Satisfaction, while the lowest correlation exists between Skill variety and Satisfaction. All the correlation coefficients which significant which depicts that Independent variables (IVs) and the Dependent variable (DV) are significantly correlated with each other.

Table 1. Correlation Matrix

Variable	Skill Variety	Task Significance	Task Identity	Satisfaction
Skill Variety	1			
Task Significance	.356**	1		
Task Identity	.289**	.356**	1	
Satisfaction	.337**	.421**	.508**	1

** $p < .01$

Regression Analysis

To examine the influence of the independent variables on the dependent variable, regression analysis was performed. In order to see if regression can be run on the data, Normality was checked using Skewness and Kurtosis, which was found to be in an acceptable range. Table 2 shows the results of regression analysis between the IVs (Skill Variety, Task Significance & Task Identity) and the DV which is Satisfaction.

Table 2. Results for Regression

DV	IV	S.E	β	p	T	Adjusted R ²
Satisfaction	Skill Variety	.030	.121	.040	4.03	.44
	Task Significance	.060	.174	.005	2.90	
	Task Identity	.089	.230	.000	2.584	

The effect of skill variety on satisfaction is significant with $\beta= 0.121$, $t= 4.03$, $p< .05$. The effect of task significance on satisfaction is also significant with $\beta=.174$, $t= 2.90$ and $p<.05$. The effect of task identity on satisfaction is also significant with $\beta=0.230$, $t= 2.584$, $p<.05$. All these results support hypothesis H1. Overall the model explains 44% of the variance and Task Identity has the greatest association with satisfaction.

Moderation Analysis

In order to measure the effects of Career Advancement and Career Stage as moderators in the relationship between three Job Characteristics and Satisfaction, a Baron and Kenny moderation approach was employed. For this purpose, two regressions are run. Firstly, with the IV and moderator as predictors and then a multiple linear regression with IV, moderator, and the interaction between IV & moderator as predictors were run using SPSS. If R² increases for the interaction model then the interaction is significant and moderation is supported. Career advancement, as seen in Table 3, acts as a moderator between the three components of core job characteristics and job satisfaction, since the value of R² and β increased after creating the interaction term and running a regression with it. This means that when expected career advancement is high, then job stimulating characteristics have a greater impact on satisfaction. Thus Hypothesis 3 is supported by the results. However, as shown in Table 4, Career stage does not act as a moderator between any of the three core components of job characteristics and job satisfaction because values of R² decreased after incorporating the interaction term in the regression model. This means that the level of career stage does not matter in the relationship between job stimulating characteristics and satisfaction. So, the results do not support Hypothesis 2.

Table 3. Moderating effect of Career Advancement

Variables	Adjusted R ²	S.E	β*	β**	t
Skill variety		.054*	.58	.60	10.73*
Career advancement	0.476*	.038*	.18	.19	4.70*
Skill variety × Career advancement	0.488**	.064**		.28	5.74**
Task Significance		.064*	.50	.57	7.83*
Career Advancement	0.375*	.048*	.17	.19	3.54*
Task Significance × Career advancement	0.389**	.065**		.38	5.84**
Task Identity		.051*	.58	.60	11.37*
Career Advancement	0.466*	.035*	0.36	0.06	10.28*
Task Identity × Career Advancement	0.478**	.064**		.26	4.064**

* Predictors (IV, Moderator)

** Predictors (IV, Moderator, Interaction term)

Table 4. Moderating effect of Career Stage

Variables	R ²	S.E	B*	B**	T
Skill variety	.458*	.054*	.607	.58	11.242*
Career Stage		.038*	.155	.22	4.0789*
Skill variety × Career Stage	0.410**	.029**		.014	.480**
Task Significance	.400*	.053*	.55	.54	10.37*
Career Stage		.039*	.38	.37	9.70*
Task Significance × Career Stage	0.355**	.21**		.30**	1.42**
Task Identity	.420*	.052*	.54	.53	10.38*
Career Stage		.037	.36	.25	9.729*
Task Identity × Career Stage	.395**	.26		.31**	1.19**

* Predictors (IV, Moderator)

** Predictors (IV, Moderator, Interaction term)

Career stage does not act as a moderator between core component job characteristics and job satisfaction, because the R square value and B coefficient values decreased after incorporating the interaction term. Moreover t values for the interaction term are also less than two.

Discussion

Job satisfaction is a core notion in organizational psychology, and research on its determinants has strong practical relevance for human resources management. The findings of this study show that career stage does not act as a moderator between job characteristics and job satisfaction, contradictory to what Fried et al. (2007) proposed, but career advancement moderates the relationship between job characteristics and job satisfaction. The findings of this study, which contradicts Fried et al.'s model, are not surprising, as the average job satisfaction levels differ, and the antecedents of job satisfaction might also be valued differently across nations (Hauff, Richter, & Tressin, 2015).

The contribution of this paper is that it reveals that Fried et al.'s (2007) model is partially applicable to Chinese society. This may be mainly because Chinese people start careers at a later age, such as 32 years and soon they encounter the crisis of midlife at 39 years, as described by Levinson in his career theory (Jeffrey, 2006). Therefore, career stages do not act as moderator for the job satisfaction of Chinese academics. Rather career advancement is more important for their satisfaction, owing to their delayed career opening.

The theoretical contribution of this study is that it addresses a gap in literature by empirically investigating stimulating job characteristics by incorporating 'career' in the form of the moderating effects Expected Career Advancement and Career Stage and their relationship with the attitudinal reactions of Chinese employees. Practically, job fulfillment is important to labor market research and guidelines just as in human resource management, as it is connected to performance (Harter et al. 2010), so employees usually accept challenging jobs which lead to satisfaction. This study will help human resource managers to design job characteristics and at the same time indicates that they also need to include career advancement, because in future-oriented economies career expectation acts as catalyst, as it ensures greater satisfaction.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

The present study, has some limitations., The demography of sample is limited to Chinese universities. This study can be conducted in other countries who also have a different career orientation to see and compare the effects of these variables for various nations and private/ public sector workers. A longitudinal study could add rigor and make the study more valid. Most academics have explained that

if the context or situation has not been dealt with systematically then it affects Job Design Theory—the situational opportunities and limitations that influences employees' attitudes and behaviors (Johns, 2006). Therefore, it is recommended that the future researcher should consider the contextual factor while designing the theoretical background of Job Design in their research. In spite of its limitations, the present study adds a very significant contribution in the field of the study of academics.

References

- Barnabé, C., & Burns, M. (1994). Teachers' job characteristics and motivation. *Educational Research*, 36(2), 171–185.
- Fang, T. (2003). A critique of Hofstede's fifth national culture dimension. *International journal of cross cultural management*, 3(3), 347–368.
- Flaherty, Karen E., & James M. Pappas (2000). The role of trust in salesperson-sales manager relationships, *Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management*, 20, 4, 271–279.
- Flaherty, K.E., & Pappas, J.M. (2002a). The influence of career stage on Job Attitude: Toward a Contingency Perspective, *Journal of Personal Selling and sales Management* 22 (3), 1–6.
- Flaherty, K.E., & Pappas, J.M. (2002b). Using career stage theory to predict turnover intentions among salespeople, *Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice* 10(3), 48–57.
- Fried, Y., Grant, A.M., Levi, A.S., Hadani, M., & Slowik, L.H. (2007). Job design in temporal context: A career dynamics perspective. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 28(7), 911–927.
- Greenhaus, J.H. (2006). *Career management* [M]. Beijing: Tsinghua University Press.
- Hackman, J.R. & Oldham, G.R. (1975), Development of the job diagnostic survey, *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 60 (2), 159–170.
- Hackman, J.R. & Oldham, G.R. (1980), *Work Redesign* Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.
- Hauff, S., Richter, N.F., & Tressin, T. (2015). Situational job characteristics and job satisfaction: The moderating role of national culture. *International Business Review*, 24(4), 710–723.
- Herzberg, F., Mausner, B., & Snyderman, B.B. (2011). *The motivation to work* (Vol. 1). Piscataway, NJ: Transaction publishers.
- Harter, J.K., Schmidt, F.L., Asplund, J.W., Killham, E.A., & Agrawal, S. (2010). Causal impact of employee work perceptions on the bottom line of organizations. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 5(4), 378–389.
- Hofstede, G.H. (1993). [BOOK REVIEW] Cultures and organizations, software of the mind. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 38, 132–134.
- Hart, A.W. (1990). Work redesign: A review of literature for education reform. *Advances in research and theories of school management and educational policy*, 1, 31–69.
- Igbaria, M., Parasuraman, S., & Badawy, M.K. (1994). Work experiences, job involvement, and quality of work life among information systems personnel. *MIS quarterly*, 175–201.

- Igbaria, M., Greenhaus, J.H., & Parasuraman, S. (1991). Career orientations of MIS employees: an empirical analysis. *MIS quarterly*, 151–169.
- Jansen, K.J., & Shipp, A.J. (2013). A review and agenda for incorporating time in fit research. *Organizational fit: Key issues and new directions*, 195–221.
- Johns, G. (2006). The essential impact of context on organizational behavior. *Academy of Management Review*, 31(2), 386–408.
- Kanungo, R.N. (1982). Measurement of job and work involvement. *Journal of Applied Psychology* 67(3), 341–349. doi: 10.1037/0021-9010.67.3.341
- McGrath, J.E., & Tschan, F. (2004). *Temporal matters in social psychology: Examining the role of time in the lives of groups and individuals*. American Psychological Association.
- Morgeson, F.P., & Campion, M.A. (2002). Minimizing tradeoffs when redesigning work: Evidence from a longitudinal quasi-experiment. *Personnel Psychology*, 55, 589–612.
- Morgeson, F.P., & Campion, M.A. (2003). Work design. In W.C. Borman, D.R. Ilgen & R.J. Klimoski. *Handbook of psychology: Industrial and organizational psychology*, Vol. 12 (pp. 423–452). Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.
- Miskel, C.G. (1982). Motivation in educational organizations. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 18(3), 65–88.
- Maslow, A.H. (1943). A theory of human motivation. *Psychological review*, 50(4), 370.
- Proctor, R.W., & Van Zandt, T. (2018). *Human factors in simple and complex systems*. Boca Raton, FL: CRC press.
- Schoenfelder, T.E., & Hantula, D.A. (2003). A job with a future? Delay discounting, magnitude effects, and domain independence of utility for career decisions. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 62(1), 43–55.
- Shen, J., Leslie, J.M., Spybrook, J.K., & Xin, M. (2012). Are principal background and school processes related to teacher job satisfaction? A multilevel study using schools and staffing survey 2003–2004. *American Educational Research Journal*, 49(2), 200–230.
- Singh, J. (1993). Striking a balance in boundary-Spanning Positions: An Investigation of Some Unconventional Influences of Role Stressors and Job Characteristics on Job Outcomes of Salesperson, *Journal of Marketing*, 62 (3), 69–86
- Skaalvik, E.M., & Skaalvik, S. (2011). Teacher job satisfaction and motivation to leave the teaching profession: Relations with school context, feeling of belonging, and emotional exhaustion. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 27, 1029–1038.
- Turner, A.N. & Lawrence, P.R. (1965), *Industrial Jobs and the Worker*. Boston, MA: Harvard University, Division of Research,.
- Wang, M., Rieger, M.O., & Hens, T. (2011). *How Time Preferences Differ: Evidence from 45 Countries*. Bergen: Department of Finance and Management Science, Norwegian School of Economics.
- Wang, M., Rieger, M.O., & Hens, T. (2016). How time preferences differ: Evidence from 53 countries. *Journal of Economic Psychology*, 52, 115–135.
- Webster's new world dictionary of the American language* (10th ed.). (1995). NY: Merriam-Webster
- Xia, J., Gao, X., & Shen, J. (2017). School Autonomy: A Comparison between China and the United States. *Chinese Education & Society*, 50(3), 284–305.