

Effects of Task Identity on Employee Motivation: A Survey of Eldoret Polytechnic, Kenya

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Abstract

Motivation is one of the major challenges in human resource management and without a motivated workforce; organizations stand to suffer in terms of production and efficiency. The study sought to determine the effect of task identity on employee motivation using Hackmans's job characteristics model and the content theories of motivation. The context of study is localized, and this forms the research gap. A study/survey of Eldoret Polytechnic was done. The objective of the study was determination of relationship between task identity, and employee motivation. Thus the research hypothesis was to determine whether there is significant relationship between task identity and employee level of motivation. The research design used correlational research design which correlated task identity to employee motivation. Methodology of research used was descriptive and inferential statistics. The model for methodology is: $Y_0 = X_1$; where Y is the dependent variable which is employee motivation, and independent variable X_1 , to represent task identity, respectively. A sample of 110 employees was obtained from a population of 364 employees. The population was stratified into administrative staff, teaching staff and non-teaching staff. Primary data was collected using structured questionnaire questions. The data collected was edited, coded, and tabulated. It was analyzed using SPSS (statistical package for social scientists) version 19, to carry out linear regression analysis. Findings showed a correlation between task identity ($r=0.531$, $p=0.000<0.05$; $B=0.060$); The hypothesis was rejected, and the alternative hypothesis was taken, meaning that task identity has a significant effect on employee motivation. This means that up to 67.9% of employee motivation can be explained by task identity factor. The result of the study is that task identity has a positive effect on employee motivation. The study recommends that managers of organizations can use these findings to make human resource decisions regarding job analysis and also when formulating Policies on human resource aspects like recruitment, remuneration, and retention policies.

Keywords: Task Identity, Employee Motivation

1.0 Background to the Study

With globalization and increasing competition, strategic human resource management is necessary. No human resource challenge likely exceeds worker motivation in importance or potential for employer and employee satisfaction. The study looked task identity as a factor influencing employee motivation. Motivation is a drive which brings about action. Motivation provides a never-ending struggle for both employers and employees, Lawler (1969). Organizations today are recognizing the importance of a highly energized workforce. Among the challenges is the management of human resources which is a dynamic process that is facing rapid changes not only in Kenya but in the global business environment. Competition has become so stiff that strategic human resource management is core issue to the success of an enterprise.

Task identity is one of the strategies of improving the level of employee motivation. The life the employee lives is highly determined by the nature of work life. His family life, social relationship, even routine habits and hobbies revolve around his job. Hence, QWL has an intimate relation with the quality of life which the organization cannot afford to ignore any more.

The research sought to find out if there is significant relationship between task identity and employee motivation. Motivation has presented itself as a problem in organizations because to achieve goals human resources need to be utilized and this is only possible if the workforce is motivated. Even a well-equipped organization with necessary capital assets may not realize its goals if the employees are not motivated. The organization's goals cannot be satisfied without the efforts of its people. Human beings have needs at varied levels. At the work

place, the individual looks to the organization for opportunities to achieve satisfying work experiences. Task identity thus, is the concern for work experience which contributes to the personal growth Lawler (1969).

The work a person does give him his identity, and a sense of self-worth (Herriot *et al* 1998). This implies that a job that a person can identify himself with will give a worker a feeling of importance and thus energize him to put more effort in his work. In any organization, success is contingent on how well its employees perform. An individual performance is a function of their abilities to do the job, and their willingness to do it. Thus, organizations cannot afford to ignore the structure of the jobs. When employees are satisfied with their jobs, it will also be easy to retain them, because they will see meaning in their jobs. Findings of the study will help the organization to be proactive in their efforts to motivate employees through offering jobs that have task identity. It is against these challenges that the research seeks to establish the relationship between task identity and employee Motivation. It is against this background that the study was done to determine how the structuring of work affects the level of employee motivation.

2.0 Statement of the Problem

Employees have different expectations of their employers and different views of what they think their employer has a right to expect of them. They vary widely from what they want from their jobs. Employees expect to be motivated, and they expect to handle tasks that give them satisfaction. Thus the research resorted to finding out significant relationship between task identity and employee motivation.

Nahrgang, and Morgeson (2007) noted that there are weaknesses in importance and impact of work design, Morgeson and Campion (2003) and Humphrey *et al.* (2007), highlighted the need for additional theory construction and more empirical research in this area - “The apparent decline of interest in work identity research is troubling”... this “reduced research interest in recent times is all the more surprising given the resurgent interest in work design in organizations” (Morgeson and Campion, 2003). The benefit of employee motivation arising from task identity may not be clear to most organizations, neither is the relationship between task identity and motivation. The gap is determination of the level of significance in the relationship between task identity and employee motivation. Our most important non-technical role is to motivate and inspire staff (Synder Gerald, June, 2007).

There is always a tendency for employers and organizations to expect employees to be productive without considering the nature of jobs that they give them (Lawler, 1969). The research seeks to establish the extent to which task identity at Eldoret Polytechnic affect the level of employee motivation.

3.0 Objective of Study

To determine the effect of task identity on employee motivation

4.0 Research Hypothesis

Ho: Task identity has no significant effect on employee motivation. ($r=0$)

5.0 Literature Review

5.1 Theoretical Framework

The research undertaken is based on the content theories of motivation; according to Abraham Maslow (1954), Herzberg (1987) and David McClelland (1987). Hertzberg *et al* (1987) suggested emphasizing motivators, the intrinsic factors that increase job satisfaction. They emanate from the job content and they include: achievement, recognition, responsibility, advancement, the work itself, and the possibility of growth. Although today we say the theory was too simplistic, it has had a strong influence on how jobs are currently designed. The researcher will investigate the nature of jobs that motivate employees with high levels of achievement needs. Theoretical framework is hinged on Hackman’s (1987) Job characteristics from where we draw task identity as one of the factors characterizing a job

Money is not everything. Most people are happy to receive what they consider a fair paycheck, but that is never the whole story. They want recognition for a job well done, opportunities to learn and grow, a positive workplace and a supportive team.

5.2 Motivation Theories

Motivation is the inner force that drives employee behavior. The intensity of one’s inner force to do a task or accomplish a goal describes the level of motivation. Operationalization of employee motivation has been captured by use of constructs of job satisfaction and reduced absenteeism. Motivation has been defined as: the

psychological process that gives behavior purpose and direction (Kreitner, 1995). It is a predisposition to behave in a purposive manner to achieve specific unmet needs (Buford, Bedeian, and Linder, 1995). Motivation is an internal drive to satisfy an unsatisfied need (Higgins, 1994). Motivation is the way urges aspirations, drives and needs of human beings direct or control or explain their behavior (Appleby 1994).

Esteem needs are those for self-esteem and for esteem from others. Self-actualization needs are the need to fulfill oneself by making maximum use of abilities, skills, and potential. My view is that managers who accept Maslow's hierarchy of needs should attempt to change their organizations and management practices so that employees' needs can be addressed. The need for a having a job that is whole and thus enabling the employee to identify himself with it will address such needs of self esteem.

On the other hand, Herzberg *et al* (1959) developed a content theory known as the two-factor theory of motivation. One set of these factors looks at intrinsic conditions, the job content – when presenting the job, builds strong levels of motivation that can result in good job performance. If these conditions are not present, they do not prove highly dissatisfying. The factors in this set are called the satisfiers or motivators and include work itself which if well tailored will give the jobholder satisfaction. Fredrick Herzberg *et al* (1987) motivation - Hygiene theory argues that intrinsic job factors motivate, while extrinsic factors only placate employees. Fredrick Herzberg *et al* (1966-1987), could be said to have taken Maslow's ideas a step further by identifying the job or work itself as the substantive source of motivation.

David McClelland (1987) proposes that there are three major needs in workplace situation: need for achievement, need for affiliation, and need for power. A person with high need for achievement will therefore prefer to have a complete job which he can identify himself, that is, a job that has task identity, so that when he gets it done he can be satisfied. This type of person prefers to work alone or with other high achievers. They do not need praise or recognition, achievement of the task is their reward. A high need to achieve has been positively related to higher work performance when jobs provide identity. Based on research results McClelland developed a descriptive set of factors that reflect a high need for achievement which can be realized when a person has a complete task assigned to him so that when he completes, he can get satisfaction.

5.3 Hackman's Job Characteristic Model (JCM)

Task Identity

Task identity is the when tasks are combined to form complete jobs. Employers can capitalize on employees' interests when designing jobs. Job design provides guidelines to help get appropriate fit between employees and their job Hackman and Oldham (1975).

Research attempts to identify task attributes proved that motivation was influenced by job structure (that is, it was found that it is possible to design jobs to increase motivation). Research evidence by Turner and Lawrence, (1965), indicate that Jobs that provide job characteristics/attributes such as variety, autonomy, identity and feedback increased motivation in turn resulting in job outcomes like the following: job commitment, job involvement, increased attendance and job satisfaction, with individual differences moderating the level of outcomes.

Hackman and Oldham (1975), proposed that people with higher order needs would respond positively to enriched jobs. This view is in tune with McClelland three needs theory as well as Herzberg's two sets of needs theory. From the motivational standpoint, the JCM suggests that internal rewards are obtained when an employee *learns* that he or she *personally* has performed well on the task that he or she *cares* about. The more the three conditions characterize a job, the greater the employee's motivation, performance, and satisfaction and the lower his or her absenteeism and likelihood of resigning. As the model shows, the links between the job dimension and the outcome are moderated by the strength of the individual's growth needs (The person's desire for self esteem, and self actualization).

According to the JCM, any job can be described in terms of the five core job dimensions, defined as follows: Skill variety: the degree to which the job requires a variety of different activities so the worker can use a number of different skills and talent. Task identity: the degree to which the job requires completion of a whole and identifiable piece of work. Tasks should be combined or put together to form a new, larger module of work (job enlargement) to increase skill variety and task identity. Create natural work units. Managers should design tasks that form an identifiable and meaningful whole to increase employee "ownership" of the work and encourage employees to view their work as meaningful and important rather than as irrelevant. Task significance: the degree to which the job has a substantial impact on the lives or work of other people. Autonomy: 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, “doing” and the “controlling” aspects of the job and increase employee autonomy. Feedback: 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/her performance. Feedback lets employees know how well they are performing their jobs and whether their performance is improving, deteriorating, or remaining constant. Ideally, employees should receive performance directly as they do their jobs rather than from managers.

Job design focuses in the context of the individual needs for economic well being and personal growth. It touches on the quality of work life (QWL) which is the concern for work experience which contribute to personal growth and development of employees. Aspects of job design include job rotation, job enlargement, job enrichment and job autonomy. Job rotation involves rotating an individual from one job to another. In so doing the individual is expected to complete more jobs since each job include different tasks. Job rotation involves increasing the range of jobs and perception of variety in the job content, and increase job satisfaction. It is good for training recent college graduates. Job Enlargement involves increases in job range, which will increase job satisfaction. It is a form of de-specialization. Although an enlarged job requires a longer training period, job satisfaction leading to improved performance results, because boredom is reduced. Expand jobs vertically. Vertical expansion (job enrichment) gives employees responsibilities and controls that were formerly reserved for managers. It partially closes the gap between the on an occasional basis. For example, frequent fliers at Continental Airline bestow Pride in Performance certificate to employees who have been helpful. Employees can then redeem coupons for valuable. Job Enrichment is an approach by Herzberg that seeks to improve task efficiency and human satisfaction by means of building into people’s jobs greater scope for personal achievement and recognition.

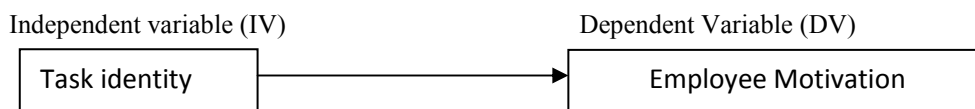
5.4 Linking Employee Motivation to Task Identity

A link between motivation and task identity and motivation is evident. Herzberg and his colleagues (1959) played an instrumental role in encouraging scholars to think about the psychology of work and the making of work interesting in order to achieve similar ends. This, along with the scholarship of others (for example, Hackman and Lawler (1971; Hulin and Blood (1968); Turner and Lawrence (1965), was instrumental in reversing the standardization, specialization, and simplification of jobs as efforts of promoting job enlargement and enrichment emerged which in turn encouraged jobs that have task identity.

People are said to be intrinsically motivated to conduct a certain activity when they are ‘freely engaging in activities that they find interesting, that provide novelty and optimal challenge’ (Deci and Ryan 2000).

Over the years, two strands of literature have evolved with regard to intrinsic motivation. First, there is the task characteristics literature that claims that intrinsic motivation at work ‘may actually have more to do with how tasks are designed and managed than with the personal dispositions of the people’ (Hackman and Oldham, 1980). Over the years, much evidence has been found that jobs that offer task identity do indeed enhance the intrinsic motivation of employees. For example Jansen *et al.*, (1996), Laamanen *et al.*, (1999) and Houkes (2002), assert that an employer cannot simply maximize employee motivation by motivating ‘a member of staff intrinsically by making his or her job as interesting as possible and extrinsically by promising a bonus’ (Frey and Osterloh, 2002). But they should structure jobs so that an employee does a total job.

6.0 Conceptual Framework



Source: Researcher, (2014)

7.0 Research Methodology

The study was carried out in Eldoret Polytechnic, Uasin-Gishu County. Employee motivation is a challenge to big institutions of this nature and thus the need and the relevance to carry out a survey there to determine the magnitude of the effect of job designing on employee motivation.

An explanatory survey design was carried out and data was collected. Survey design was chosen for purposes of data collection because the population sample was large. Correlation design was used in analyzing the data. According to Mugenda (2008), correlational studies focus on relationships among variables in a study. In this

research, questionnaires were used. The target population of the study is 364 employees.

A representative sample was obtained from the target population of 364 employees. A purposive sample of 30% of the target population gave a representative sample or the sampling unit. A disproportionate Stratified sample design was used because the numbers of employees in each stratum are not the same. Sampling technique was done within gender within the strata. From each stratum, a list of all male and that of all female was generated. A sample of 30% was subsequently drawn randomly from each gender in each stratum to ensure that the sample was representative in terms of gender and in terms of each stratum biasness. The sample size was 110 employees.

7.1 Data Collection Instruments

Primary data was collected using self-administered questionnaires. The questions in the questionnaire addressed the objective of the study and related it to the dependent variable to ensure that it captured the information that was intended to be collected. Through this, content validity was also achieved. The researcher used mainly close-ended questions. The respondents were to remain anonymous.

7.2 Testing for Validity and Reliability of Instruments

The reliability of the questionnaires was determined by checking the questions asked against the objective of the study to ensure that there was content validity and thus reliability of the instrument. A pilot survey for testing the questionnaire was done at Eldoret Polytechnic. The pilot survey was the replica and rehearsal of the main survey.

8.0 Data Analysis and Presentation

Correlation analysis and Pearson's coefficient of correlation (r), were the main SPSS output. Quantitative techniques for data analysis were a combination of descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. Analysis of variance (ANOVA) was also used.

8.1 The Linear Regression Model

The built model for the study is the linear regression model; where the model specification is:

$Y = \alpha + \beta_1 X_1$
Y = dependent variable, which in this case is employee motivation. There was one independent variables X_1 , where X_1 = Task Identity

$$Y = \alpha + \beta_1 X_1$$

The outcome of the correlations was $Y = 0.531 x_1$

The unstandardized coefficients of the parameters, α , β_1 , gave an output of employee motivation which was the constant variable = .200; (task identity = 0.068)

9.0 Findings

9.1 Demographics of Respondents

The results indicate that 65.5% of the respondents were male and 34.5% were female. Majority of the staff had served in the institution between 2-5 years (47%) and between 6-10 years (31%) Lecturers form he largest group of staff. Regarding the level of education, 56.4% of the respondents have attained college education, 32.7% have gone up to University. Thus, majority of staff have college education. The least number of staff are those who have primary education and they are only four, which gives a percentage of 3.6% a further analysis to show the levels of staff revealed that 42.7% of the population sample were lecturers, followed by non-teaching staff (who are mainly the junior staff also) forming 39%, then middle level staff form 22% of the population sample. Top management are the least with a sample size of 2 1.8% of the total sample size. The favorable education and long experience of staff interviewed is likely to give more meaning to their jobs and the ones with low education may not comprehend and appreciate the essence of a well designed job.

The study tested the different extents to which task identity influences employees' level of satisfaction or motivation. Task identity as a characteristic of a job was seen by 36.3% of the respondents as contributing to employee satisfaction while 35.5% felt that this feature does not contribute to employee satisfaction 38.2% were neutral or undecided. It is evident that a significant number of employees were undecided, and this could be attributed to the fact that there may be other factors other than what the study was looking for that influenced the motivation of employees. These would have come up if the assumption of holding all other things constant had not been made.

9.2 Descriptive Statistics

Association between task identity and employee motivation was explained using descriptive statistics. Linear regression analysis was done and the outcome was interpreted using descriptive statistics. This descriptive is

important as it shows the number of cases contributing to each correlation. The mean and the standard deviation were used to describe the statistical outcomes. It was found that employee motivation had a mean of 3.1139 and a standard deviation of 1.06607. The interpretation of this is that many respondents agreed that task identity affected their level of motivation.

9.3 Analysis of Coefficients of Predictor Variable

B-values reveal the extent to which each predictor affects the outcome, if the effects of all other predictors are held constant. In this case (task identity = .068), All the values are positive, which means that as the independent variable increases, the dependent variable also increases and vice versa. It implies a positive relationship. *t* statistics tells us if the β value is significantly different from zero, a significant value of *t* indicates that the slope of the regression line is significantly different from horizontal. The confidence interval has crossed zero, indicating that in some samples the predictor has a negative relationship to the outcome whereas in others it has a positive relationship.

9.4 Results of the Regression Model

R is the simple correlation between predictors and outcome variable, and the study findings gave an *R* of (.824). R^2 is a measure of how much of the variability in the outcome is accounted for, or by the predictor. The survey gave an R^2 of (.679). This is 67.9%, and it means that the task identity, which is the independent variable, affected the dependent variable to an extent of 67.9% task variety. This means 67.9 percent of the difference is as a result of task identity. The adjusted R^2 gives idea of how well the model generalizes and ideally it should be the same or very close to the value of R^2 in this case the difference is $(0.679-0.664=.015)$, about 0.015%. This means that if our model was derived from the population instead of the sample it would account for approximately 0.015% less variance in the outcome. The model causes the R^2 to change from zero to .679, and this change in the amount of variance explained gives rise to an *F*-ratio of 44.021, and this change is significant. Table below illustrates the model summary.

Model Summary

Model	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Std. error of the estimate	Change statistics					Durbin Watson
					R^2 change	F change	df1	df2	Sig. change	
1	.824 ^a	.679	.664	.61824	.679	44.021	5	104	.000	2.054

9.5 Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)

The ANOVA test whether the model is significantly better at predicting the outcome than using the mean as a “best guess”. The *F*-ratio represent the ratio of the improvement in prediction that results from fitting or using the model, relative to the inaccuracy that still exist in the model. So the model as shown shows that the regression model that was used significantly improved our ability to predict the outcome variable (44.021, $p < 0.01$). Thus, task identity, can be used as predictors of employee motivation.

ANOVA Results

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	84.128	5	16.826	44.021	.000 ^a
	Residual	39.751	104	.382		
	Total	123.879	109			

9.6 Testing of Hypothesis

The study adopted a confidence level of 95 percent to decide whether the hypotheses could be retained or rejected. H_0 : Task identity has no significant effect on employee motivation was also rejected because the results give a correlation of 0.531 and a *P*-value of 0.000 which is less than 0.05 at 95% confidence level. The alternative hypothesis will hold true that Task identity has significant effect on employee motivation.

10.0 Conclusions

Effects of task identity on Employee Job Satisfaction (Motivation) Findings of this work are from the research objective which gave rise to hypothesis. From the results obtained there was an association between task identity and employee motivation. Findings from the coefficient statistics show that task variety can explain up to 61 percent variance in employee level of motivation. Findings showed that task identity can explain up to 67.9 per cent of variability in the outcome/dependent variable (employee motivation). This shows that there is a link between task identity and employee motivation.

11. Recommendations

From the results of the findings, this study recommends to managers of organizations to take a proactive role in coming up with jobs that have task identity and to use the psychological approach to job designing so that when coming up with job descriptions, they consider the aspects in a given task that can motivate the workers. Managers of organizations are also encouraged to use the findings of this study to improve human resource policy framework to address employee motivation issues and human resource challenges like the challenges of recruitment, selection, placements, and job descriptions.

Management should seek to design jobs which offer task identity, so as to make the worker feel proud and have a sense of achievement when that particular job is well done, Hackman (1977).

Further study may be carried out by looking at other factors, other than task identity that may also influence employee motivation. Factors like office layout, employee needs and expectation and also working conditions.

The study could be replicated but in a different organizational set up, like in a manufacturing industry, unlike this one of an educational institution.

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