

Job Design and Employee Performance: the Moderating Role of Employee Psychological Perception

Memoona Zareen^{1*} Kiran Razzaq¹

Bahaudin G. Mujtaba²

1. Superior University Department of Business Administration, Lahore, Pakistan.
2. H. Wayne Huizenga School of Business and Entrepreneurship, Nova Southeastern University, Florida.

* E-mail of the corresponding author: memoona_zareen@yahoo.com

Abstract

Job design plays a vital role in the performance maximization. A well designed job brings involvement and satisfaction to the employees and they perform well by employing all their energies in the work. Job design remains a valued issue among the researchers for its importance and effectiveness. A well designed job, according to psychological perception and attitude of employees, motivate workers towards task performance, and such employees become highly productive and loyal to the organization. This study is based on a review of the published literature and personal observation in the workplace to analyze the impact of job design on employee performance. Furthermore, this study proposes a new variable known as “psychological perception” of employee to highlight how employees behave towards a job design. A conceptual framework has been proposed to show the construct of job design by job rotation, job enrichment and job enlargement and relationship of job design with employee performance. It has been found that the psychological perception of an employee has a significant positive impact on the relationship of job design and employee performance.

Keywords: Job Design, Job Rotation, Job Enrichment, Job Enlargement, Psychological Perception, Employee Performance.

1. Introduction

Job design has been one of the most effective tools used for optimizing an employee's performance. It can be defined as changing the content and processes of a job to increase an employee's satisfaction, motivation and productivity (Knapp and Mujtaba, 2010). Effective Job design is measure of the degree to which the employee is involved in his tasks and assignments. Many researchers have analyzed the relationship of job design and employee performance and concluded that there is a strong positive relationship between them. Job design is not a new concept, it has been discussed in early 20th century by Fredrick Taylor and then by his predecessors a lot of work has been done on the role of job design and employee performance, but this concept failed to attain much attention from managers. This led to a decrease in the productivity of many organizations facing opportunity cost and productivity below optimum level. It is believed that now-a-days most of the employees are not happy with their job design or not assigned with the tasks that they feel encouraged and motivated to perform. An effective job design brings involvement of an employee in work related activities which clearly forecasts employee output, departmental productivity and organizational success (Bates, 2004; Harter, 2002; Baumruk, 2004).

The purpose of this study is to emphasize on the role of an effective job design in performance of employees and giving an initiative to managers on how the psychological perception of employees about an effective job design can help to involve them in their work and leads them towards higher performance.

Employee's job involvement and performance increases if the job design is aligned with the employee psychological requirements and perceptions. An effective job design for the employees can increase their involvement in the job, they enjoy performing tasks and exert all cognitive, emotional and physical energies to achieve goals (Khan, 1992). According to Khan, engaging their physical, cognitive and psychological presence leads employees to full performance (Khan, 1990). Employees with a job design due to their determination, invest their hand, head and heart to job (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1995).

Job design of one's own choice brings Involvement, satisfaction and motivation. Such employees bear more pain for their work, they enjoy their work and stay extra hours willingly. They consider work as virtue for them and a part of their lives (Dubin, 1956; Rabinowitz and Hall 1977) they feel that they are getting what they want from their jobs and fulfill their duties as ethical responsibility. These motivated, involved and delighted behaviors tend to enhance the employee performance and ultimately organizational productivity. On the contrary if the employees are not satisfied with their job design they feel exhausted and unwilling to work properly only for the sake of organizational goals. Frustrated employees do not utilize all their efforts instead they waste their time in non-productive issues-this is what we see in mostly public sector organizations. These types of employees destroy the organizational culture. Dissatisfied and de-motivated employees become a burden for the organization if they remain and if they quit or shift to another company they cause high employee turnover cost for the organization.

This study is aimed to highlight the relationship of job design and employee performance; though it has been defined previously but the main focus is to define a new variable of psychological perception which moderates this relationship. Psychological perception of employees towards their job shows that how the employees perceive their job, what they want from their job, whether their job is according to their mood, behavior and requirements and do they feel that the job designed for them is effective or not. To show the impact of psychological perception we have proposed a conceptual framework which highlights factors of job design, relationship of job design and employee performance and effect of psychological perception on the relationship of job design and employee performance.

Job design and employee's attitude towards job design has become an issue of great consideration in the recent years among many organizations but it has been rarely studied in academic literature in developing economies and there is a lack of awareness about its consequences and its antecedent. This study has proposed a model for the components of an effective job design and to analyze the impact of employee psychological perception and behavior towards job design. The main objectives are:

1. To define and understand the role of job design in performance maximization.
2. To explore the antecedents of job design.
3. To find the benefits associated with a well-defined and well-designed job.
4. To analyze the moderating role of employee psychological perception on the relationship of job design and employee performance.

2. Literature Review

In the ancient times the idea of job design was first presented by Adam Smith. Job design related ideas were published in 1850s which were about the manufacturing of pins. With the passage of time the idea of designing the job in such a way that employees get involved in it and this involvement enhances employees as well as organizational performance got much fame and it resulted in the introduction of job design theory by Frederick W. Taylor (1911). This idea expanded to a greater volume and adopted by various industrial engineers in order to have better control and efficiency at workplace. Fredrick Taylor, known as father of scientific management, was one of the intellectual leaders of the efficiency movement and his idea was broadly conceived. Taylor believed that managers should design a job in such a way so that workers can do it efficiently. He demonstrated that by analyzing the work, the "One Best Way" to do it can be found. This best way can maximize the level of performance of worker. Taylor argued that even the most basic, mindless tasks could be planned in a way that dramatically would increase productivity. He believed that the scientific management of the work was more effective than the initiative and incentive methods of motivating workers. The initiative and incentive methods offer an incentive to increase productivity but places the responsibility on worker to figure out how to do it.

To scientifically determine the optimal way to perform a job Taylor performed experiments that were characterized by the use of a stop watch to time a worker's sequence of motion with the goal of determining the one best way to perform a job. According to Taylor, if managers give the workers rewards for increased productivity the workers will try to achieve it by working harder but soon they will become exhausted because they will not be familiar with the right way, so it is the responsibility of the managers to design the job for workers giving them the best way so they can perform well without getting exhausted. With Taylor's time and motion study by analyzing the "one best way" to

do it can be found. Taylor experimented and after years of experiments to determine optimal work methods, he proposed four principles of scientific management.

1. Task performance methods should be scientifically studied and the best method should be adopted.
2. Workers should be selected, trained and developed by managers instead of leaving them to develop themselves.
3. Managers and supervisors should cooperate with workers so that they could follow the developed methods and designs to perform the tasks.
4. Work tasks should be divided into small elements and managers should apply scientific management principles on workers and measure their performance.

These principles were implemented in many organizations and their productivity increased by 3 to 4 times (Mujtaba, 2014; Knapp and Mujtaba, 2010).

The basic idea of Taylor was that job should be designed in such a way that it become simplified for workers and they can easily understand it and enjoy performing at workplace because workers get bored of repetitive tasks assigned to them by their managers. Later on Taylor's ideas were broadly conceived and adopted in United States, France, Switzerland, USSR and Canada and much research work and practical implication of these ideas has been done by the researchers of these States.

Taylor's ideas are applicable in the existing scenarios with little amendments.

Later on in 1960s, Frederick Herzberg's dual factor theory increased the importance of job design for workers. Herzberg's main point was that job should be enriched in such a way that employees get motivated to do an assigned task and ultimately performance is enhanced (Herzberg, 1966, 1979). Herzbergs' claim was that the job should be designed or assigned in such a way that it aid in enhancing their growth in competence, achievement, advancement, recognition and responsibility. Job engagement or involvement is a very important factor. When employees are satisfied with their job design they automatically are inclined to get involved in doing their best to complete the assigned tasks and, as a result, positive impact is observed on their overall performance. The more involved employees feel positively about the work assigned to them and beyond satisfaction they became motivated to exert their best potential in order to accomplish the tasks. According to Leiter (2011), job engagement or involvement can be identified in relation to high level of potential exerted in doing the job in a best way and also having a high involvement in work assigned to the employees (p. 22). It is broadly accredited that engagement or involvement of employee comes from the sources such as personality as well as environment (Macey & Schneider, 2008).

Many key characteristics of job are autonomy, related conflicts, demands, and understanding relations with others at workplace (Schaufeli and bakker 2004, Shirom 2010). According to Hackman and Lawler (1971), key features of job can precisely influence workers' attitude at workplace. Hackman and Lawler (1971) also identified the positive reaction of employees towards autonomy, variety, task identity and feedback. Hackman and Lawler (1971) also suggested that those employees who are willing to do their best for putting their best potential in doing a task are high on the core dimensions of autonomy, variety, task identity and feedback. As a result the employees become motivated and give their best efforts in order to achieve the organizational goals as well as personal goals, in response the performance improves and employees keep on giving their best effort to show good results. These employees continuously work hard to enhance their performance.

Due to increasing importance of job design, different scholars studied and developed various theories focusing on key characteristics of job or work (Hackman and Lawler, 1971; Hackman and Oldham, 1975; Herzberg; Musner and Synderman, 1959; Turner and Lawrence, 1965). Theories presented by these scholars are still influential for more than about 30 years of time span (Morgeson and champion, 2003). Hackman and Odham's (1976) model identified five key features work that are helpful in making jobs more satisfying for workers. The five key features of jobs are autonomy, skill variety, task identity, task significance and feedback. Hackman and Oldham's theory identified that features of autonomy, learning and participation enhances the motivational potential of work.

2.1 Job Design

Job design plays a crucial role in the achievement of organizational as well as personal goals. Job design is defined as specifying the contents or methods of any job in such a way that various requirements of the job holder can be effectively satisfied (Buchanan, 1979). These requirements may include social, technological, personal and organizational desires. Job design is related to the process of transformation of inputs to outputs and it also takes into consideration the human factors as well as organizational factors which are of very much importance in the achievement of desired performance. When employees get involved and are familiar with the job design they become more motivated to take active part in the achievement of organizational goals and as a result performance of employees increases which positively impacts the outcomes.

Some approaches to construct an effective job design are job rotation, job enrichment and job enlargement, which can be used to engage, encourage and involve employees in their work.

2.1.1 Job Rotation

This approach has been widely used in large firms. Meyer (1994) identified job rotation as learning role in firms as employees get a chance to accomplish various task and changing roles. Job rotation is also identified as an applied approach and aggrandizes job related tasks. That is the reason job rotation is planned in the job training phase because it proves helpful while transferring employees from one job to another in order to learn more and increase their knowledge by doing various jobs. As a result efficiency of employees increase and it positively impacts the performance of employees.

2.1.2 Job Enlargement

Job enlargement can be defined as the combination of different jobs and adding connected duties to job. Basically job enlargement is inspired by different motivational models of job design mainly constructed on psychology (e.g. Herzberg 1966, Hackman and Oldham, 1980). These models discuss about job related attitudes like variety, autonomy and task significance. Job enlargement broadens job scope and the employee performs a number of different tasks in his/her job.

2.1.3 Job Enrichment

Herzberg and his companions' intention was to increase employees' satisfaction at workplace in relation to work assigned to them and also to motivate employees regarding their assigned work. Job enrichment was presented by the American psychologist Frederick Herzberg in 1950s. The basic reason of this idea was to motivate employees by providing those opportunities of utilizing their abilities so that productivity and performance of the employees increase and positively impacts the organizational environment and smoothing the way for achieving organizational goals. Job enrichment increases job depth, the degree to which employees can plan and control the work involved in their jobs.

2.2 Psychological Perception

Psychological Perception is the attitude and behavior of the employee towards the likeliness of their jobs. Attitude answers the question how people feel towards some task, person, event or object. Hofstede (1908) did a lot of research work on employee attitude in 67 countries and identified four categories of individualism-collectivism, risk taking, power distance and masculinity-feminism. He later also added the long-term versus short-term orientation to this categories of cultural dimensions which tend to drive people's collective behaviors. In exploring job involvement, the main role was found of the work itself. It has been observed by many scholars that when employees are asked to give their feedback about different factors of pay, promotion, coworkers, advancement opportunities, environment and supervision, the very most factor identified is work itself (Judge and Church, 2000; Jurgesen, 1978). It does not show that other job related factors are unimportant but it concludes that the most important factor is work itself for job satisfaction of employees in the organization. It means if the employees are satisfied with their job related work then they will be more involved in completing tasks assigned to them and it ultimately affects their performance which results in fulfillment of organizational goals. Work related to job should be interesting and challenging as if employees get involved in the completion of tasks whole heartedly, their performance will increase to higher levels.

3. Proposed Model

After the review of existing literature we have analyzed that job design has a strong effect on the performance of the employee. It has been seen widely that an effective job design leads to higher performance. But we cannot generalize this because of the fact that different employees show different performance levels when assigned with the same type of tasks and assignments. This has brought a question mark in the literature and for practitioners. To solve the mystery we have introduced a new variable with the name “Psychological Perception” which affects the relationship of job design and employee performance. It is given that employees show optimum performance when they perceive their job design an effective one according to their own desires and requirements.

Figure 1 demonstrates a model proposed which suggests that a job can be designed with an effective blend of job rotation, job enrichment and job enlargement according to the attitude and behavior of the employee for performance maximization and enhancing productivity.

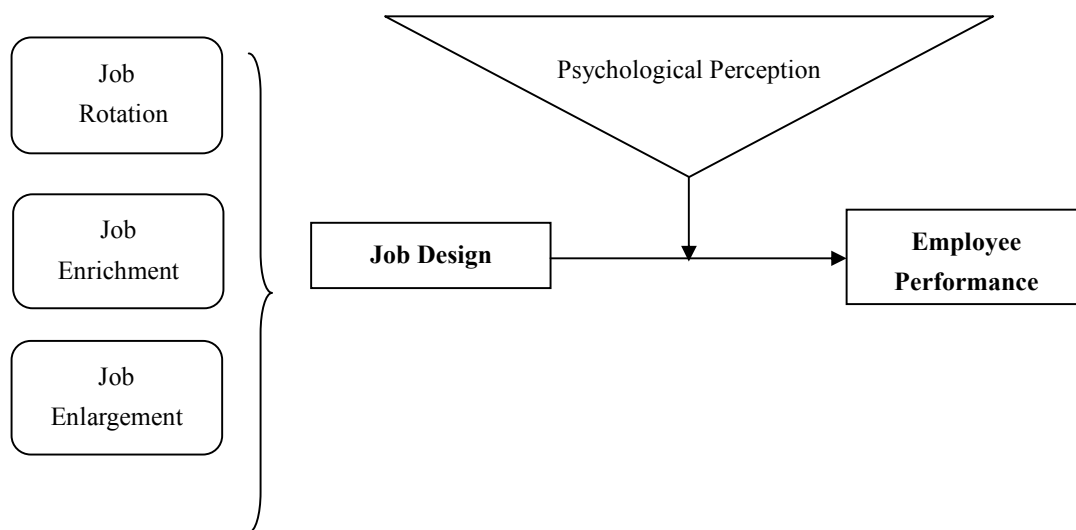


Fig: 1. Conceptual Framework of the study

The main propositions for further study of this conceptual framework can be initiated using the following predictions:

- P1:** Job Rotation is an important factor of Job Design.
- P2:** Job Enrichment is an important factor of Job Design.
- P3:** Job Enlargement is an important factor of Job Design.
- P4:** Job Design has a significant impact on Employee Performance
- P5:** Psychological Perception of employee of Job Design Effects the relationship between Job Design and Employee Performance.

4. Discussion

In the current era, employees are considered as human capital of the organization and every organization tries its best to utilize its capital for optimum performance and productivity. With the evolution of management researchers and practitioners are working on enhancing the performance of employees within the organization for better outcomes by motivating, involving, encouraging and engaging them. It is given that only well involved, satisfied and motivated employees can perform up to optimum level.

Job design is a factor of huge importance to meet the above challenges faced by human resources department of many organizations. A job well defined and well-designed leads to higher performance. Job design affects one's

attitude or psychology and brings involvement with work when it is perceived to have a positive impact. As a consequence of this, employees feel satisfied, motivated and delighted in performing tasks and assignments. Work assignments and tasks designed and assigned to employees should be according to their psychic and behavior. An effective job design motivates employees more than anything else; they enjoy performing their duties and consider them beneficial for not only the organization but for their own-self as well.

The nature of the work according to many researchers is considered the most important factor by the employees and comparatively less important by the managers. Most of the managers believe that salary, fringe benefits and monetary rewards are considered most important by the employees. Psychology of employee is a huge restriction for us to set a rule of thumb because every employee behaves differently, performs differently and achieves differently. With the difference in psychology and attitude, it should be mentioned that some employees require new, difficult to achieve and challenging tasks while others want casual routine tasks.

Some desire to perform different tasks for enhancing their knowledge, skills and experience, and on the other hand, many workers do well with a specialized task. In the same way, some feels good in team work; collaboration and communication, while others feel comfortable in standing alone. Some gets motivated by empowerment, authority and responsibility while others want to work in a team as subordinates. Overall, a job should be designed according to psychology and attitude of the employee so he/she has a positive perception of it. Also, the above mentioned requirements can be achieved by an effective job design from the blend of job rotation, job enrichment and job enlargement according to the perception of employee. An attitude answers the question how people feel towards some task, person, and event or object.

A conceptual framework has been proposed in this study after the review of existing literature. It shows the relationship of job design with employee performance and highlights the effect of employee's psychological perception on this relationship. The proposed model describes three approaches: job rotation, job enrichment and job enlargement, towards job design. Employee performance can be optimized if workers are assigned with a job, designed according to their psychological perception. If the tasks assigned get aligned to with one's attitude and behavior then employees tend to show higher performance by putting extra efforts to work and ultimately organizational productivity increases.

Outcomes of an effectively designed job according to likes and dislikes of the employee are involvement, commitment, motivation and satisfaction which ultimately lead to performance maximization and goals achievement. Involved employees exert their connected energies of hand, head and heart in their work (Khan, 1992). Hand refers to physical, head refers to cognitive and heart refers to emotional energies. Human relation theory of participation argues about involvement that as long as subordinates feel that they are consulted, their ego gets satisfied and they become more cooperative (Richie and Miles, 1970). Participatory management practice balances the involvement of managers and their subordinates in information processing, decision making and problem solving endeavors (wager, 1994). Past studies show that human resources practice (employee participation) is positively related to performance, satisfaction and productivity of an employee (Pfeffer 1994; Wagner 1994; and verma1995). Motivated employees pay extra attention and time to their work (Rizwan, 2011). They make work as a part of their life; consider ethical responsibility and virtue to perform their tasks (Brown 1996), take organizational goals as their own goals and feel delighted and satisfied while achieving them.

A job should be well designed according to the desires of the employee to achieve extra ordinary outcomes. Three approaches can be used to achieve an employee's satisfaction and motivation; job enlargement brings variety in tasks and can be used for learning of employee, job rotation moves employee from one specialized task to another, and job enrichment builds achievement, recognition, responsibility, stimulates work and vertical loading of tasks. So with the help of these approaches an effective combination of tasks, assignments and objectives can be achieved for the employees so they can formulate their goals aligned with organizational goals.

A well-motivated and satisfied employee by an ideal job design become loyal to the organization and considers himself or herself a part of the organization and organizational goals becomes his/her personal goals. If the job is designed according to the attitude of the employees their stress level declines. They feel delighted and say "this is my kind of job". Involved and motivated employees tend to show low absenteeism and spend their time in meaningful pursuits. They remain with the organization for longer tenures and become valued asset for the organization in the long run. On the contrary if the job is not according to the psychological perception of the employee it will become

hard for the organization to involve them with work. They become highly de-motivated and frustrated. These employees tend to remain with organizations for shorter periods and leave the organization to face a higher employee turnover cost. Employee turnover cost is a huge cost that companies bear if they fail to involve and motivate their employees. Such employees if remain with the organization become low productive, show higher absenteeism. Non-motivated workers often waste their time in non-productive discussions with their colleagues. They ruin the organizational environment, and organizational productivity goes down. And if large numbers of de-motivated dissatisfied employees remain with the organization for a long term it may become a huge threat for the organization to survive in this world of high competition and innovation.

An effective job design enhances the performance of employees up to optimum level and organizational productivity increases with it. Psyche of employees, attitude or behavior should be well analyzed and considered while designing tasks and assignment to satisfy, motivate and involve them in their work and retain them with the organization in the long run.

5. Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to enforce the idea of designing a job according to employee's psychology and to help managers and human resources professionals in achieving higher organizational productivity. If employees have to perform the job which is aligned to their behavior and satisfies their psychological requirements then they work effectively and efficiently. Their level of motivation and involvement goes up. These employees become the valued asset for the organization in the long run. Involved employees perform their work task not only physically but emotionally and cognitively as well. Motivated employees focus on their end goals and attempt to achieve them; they never care about the constraints and limitations. An effective job design should be according to the psychological perception of an employee, not all the employees all the time can be motivated and satisfied by a specific job design. Some employees desire to excel and accomplish something difficult to achieve with higher goal setting. In the same way a number of employees have innovative ideas and want creations others feel comfortable to perform routine tasks. These types of employees should be managed and motivated by different job designs which better fit to their behavior. So we can say that if the nature of jobs, tasks, and assignments matches with the psychology of employee, the employee tends to be the more effective, productive and helpful for the organization for achieving his/her own goals and organizational outcomes.

6. Managerial Implications

1. Managers or the human resources department of the company/organization should study the psychology of employees before designing jobs, assignments and tasks for them.
2. Employees should be interviewed at the time of recruitment to hire the desired employee whose psychology fits the existing job design.
3. Existing valued employees also should be analyzed to provide them better job design to enhance their efficiency and retain them within the organization by delighting them.
4. Employees should be involved in the process of designing their job characteristics that suits to their psychological perceptions.
5. Review and redesigning of job should be conducted at regular intervals.
6. Employees should be encouraged to set long term goals in accordance with organizational goals and their jobs should be designed in such a way that it becomes helpful for achieving their goals.
7. An effective job design should be aligned to the employee's goals as well as organizational outcomes.

7. Future Research

This was a propositional and exploratory research. As a result of the literature review and existing gaps, especially in developing economies, several prepositions have been offered as the performance of employees can be enhanced by assigning them an effectively designed job according to their psychological perception. Managers and human resources professionals need to consider the psyche, attitude and behavior of employees while designing job for them.

A conceptual framework has been proposed and there is a need of quantitative study to prove the relationships among the suggested variables.

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Author biography:

Memoona Zareen is an M. Phil student at Superior University, Department of Business Administration, Lahore, Pakistan her dissertation is *Mobile Money: Advancing Access to Financial Services*. Memoona was declared best presenter in the Joint Academic International Conference of Pakistan, Italy and France on Management Research (ICMR) 2012 organized by Superior University, Lahore, Pakistan. Her areas of research are Finance, Management and Human Capital Management (HCM). Memoona is certified for Financial and Accounting Softwares from Pakistan Industrial Technical Assistance Centre (PITAC) 2011. Memoona has completed her MBIT from Institute of Business and Information Technology, University of The Punjab in 2010 with major as finance and minor information system and management. Her master's key research projects were the Financial Analysis of Cement Industry and Emerging Role of Information Technology in Commercial Banking. Memoona served MCB Bank Ltd. in 2009. She did her Graduation from Queen Mary College, University of The Punjab in 2007 in Mathematics and passed her HSSE from BISE Lahore, Pakistan. She was born in Lahore, Pakistan. Memoona can be contacted through email at: memoona_zareen@yahoo.com

Bahaudin Mujtaba is Professor of Management at Nova Southeastern University's H. Wayne Huizenga School of Business and Entrepreneurship in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. Bahaudin has worked as an internal consultant, trainer, and teacher at Training and Development Department of Human Resources as well as retail management in the corporate arena for 16 years. Academically, Bahaudin has been teaching graduate business courses and professional development workshop both nationally and internationally (Bahamas, Jamaica, St. Lucia, Afghanistan, and Brazil) since 1996. Bahaudin is the author and co-authors of 18 books in the areas of ethics, globalization, leadership, and management. Bahaudin can be reached through email at: mujtaba@nova.edu

Kiran Razzaq is an M. Phil Scholar at Superior University Department of Business Administration, Lahore, Pakistan. At present, she is working on her thesis titled as "Value creation in Buyouts" and key areas of her Research are Finance, Management, Business Education and Human Resource Development. She has participated in International Conference on Management Research (ICMR) 2012 held by Superior University Lahore, Pakistan with her research article. Kiran has completed her Masters of Business Administration from Virtual University of Pakistan in 2011, with specialization in finance. She served Tez Gas Private Ltd. as an internee in 2010. She did B.com from University of Punjab, Pakistan in the year of 2008. She did her Matriculation from Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education (BISE) Lahore. Her contact is: kiran_pari41@yahoo.com

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