

Revitalizing motivation for healthcare office workers: An Analysis of Job Diagnostic Survey Through the Lens of Hackman and Oldham's Model

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Keywords

Healthcare office workers, job diagnostic survey, motivation, hybrid and remote work, employee engagement, productivity, patient care, job satisfaction.

Abstract

The unprecedented nature of technological advancements, emphasis on the need for superior patient care, and evolving workplace dynamics lead to the need for revitalizing various factors that improve motivation for healthcare workers. The study aims to comprehend motivation for healthcare workers through the intricate lens of the Hackman and Oldham model by conducting a job diagnostic survey. Healthcare is a crucial industry where timely delivery of patient care is prioritized, workers often aim to exceed expectations and stay motivated. The conceptual framework of Hackman and Oldham provides insight into understanding the motivational factors of the job design, employee satisfaction in their role, and channel efforts into improving the same. A key application of the survey can be identifying areas of focus and improvement that can significantly improve motivation levels for employees thereby improving their performance and reshaping the healthcare workforce. A novel approach to research has been adopted, as previous studies have extensively focused on health care workers; however, most have overlooked the challenges healthcare office workers face to support the physicians and nurses at hospitals. The originality of the study stems from this finding as healthcare administrative workers face unique challenges that may be absent in other industries, and with the current nature of jobs post the pandemic, employers have found difficulty in retaining talent, keeping workers motivated, and empowering them to perform. This study will lead to both empirical and practical implications, aims to provide insight to future researchers as well as organizational leaders to acknowledge the newer dynamics of the workplace where healthcare office workers face many struggles in their workplace like long hours of working, stressful work environment, and constant pressure to perform as their performance is directly related to patient care and often involves saving lives, leading to lack of work-life balance; and how motivation resolves these issues. The study is performed on healthcare office workers in a North Texas Hospital and Healthcare organization, by surveying them with the Hackman and Oldham instrument to grasp their motivation levels and provide suggestions to the leadership to assist employees to stay motivated and focused.

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Introduction

Motivation is an important aspect of office and administrative employees in healthcare organizations as it is an established key determinant that can either hinder or enhance patient care. Office employees manage a multitude of key tasks and processes that lay a foundation for the physicians and nurses, often ensuring seamless support of patient care; this exemplifies the vitality of employee satisfaction and motivation in healthcare, as they are often under tremendous pressure and constantly work in high-stress environments with clinical data and systems that demand high accuracy of work, timely completion of projects, cost-sensitive processes, handling with secure data in the hospital realm. Various factors affect motivation, and motivation in turn creates multiple benefits, making it a truly

multifaceted concept impacting the workforce, organizations, and patients. The job diagnostic survey (JDS) developed by Hackman and Oldham provides an operational approach to studying various components of motivation in employees, assessing the factors affecting them, and suggestions to enhance motivation to improve performance and key success factors. A literature review of recent empirical studies has highlighted the increased levels of stress, anxiety, and a feeling of defeat after the pandemic as healthcare workers were impacted by COVID-19 to a great extent. A detailed analysis of the literature review has been conducted in this study to determine the need for the study, analyze various articles, and gain support for the research. Thus, the JDS study was conducted through a survey method on 25 healthcare office workers of a Healthcare and Hospital organization in North Texas. The study aims to analyze the five dimensions of JDS, providing insights into various factors that determine motivation levels for employees.

Literature Review

Wu et al. have highlighted the recent increased levels of employee burnout in the healthcare industry and added the employers' responsibility to adopt the right measures to assist in easing burnout for employees rather than indicating burnout as a personal issue. Organizations have taken many steps to curb negative factors influencing employees and decreasing their morale, however, more initiatives are needed to ensure the organizations help employees maintain a healthy work-life balance and create a positive stress-free workplace so burnout scenarios can be avoided (Gabriel, & Aguinis, 2022). The authors suggest the importance of leadership and motivation that play determining roles in motivation among healthcare employees. The need for motivation is relevant to the current situation where all industries are realigning to the post-pandemic challenges, along with healthcare; and motivated employees can help reduce burnout, attrition, low performance, and other issues by improving the morale of employees significantly. The job resources-demands model depicted in the below image portrays that high burnout ratios occur when the resources are low and job demands are high.

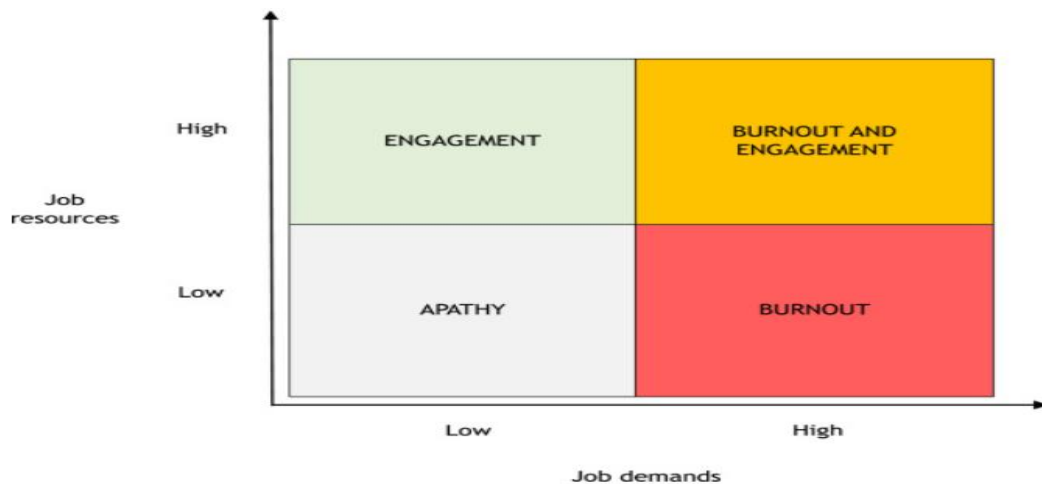


Figure 1: Job Resources-Demands Model

Source: Gabriel, K. P., & Aguinis, H. (2022). How to prevent and combat employee burnout and create healthier workplaces during crises and beyond. *Business Horizons*, 65(2), 183-192.

The impact of emotional exhaustion on healthcare employees is studied in the article authored by Chiara et al. by analyzing role ambiguity, work engagement, and commitment. These factors lead to chronic stress and negatively impact the motivation and performance of healthcare employees (Chiara, Luca, Annalisa, & Chiara, 2019). The authors have dissected various factors that contribute to these negative outcomes, their relational components, and how these outcomes can be navigated and converted to positive outcomes by introducing motivation to impact employees. Role ambiguity occurs when employees are unaware of their job expectations, and their role in the team, have inaccurate performance

metrics, and lack of feedback from the organization; all of which lead to low performance, dissatisfaction in the job, deliverables not meeting organization standards, and demotivation. Work engagement refers to the team cohesiveness, participation levels, interdependencies, and resources being undefined or not available for employees to be enabled and effective in their roles. Professional commitment is a direct outcome of high motivation as employees are committed and retained in the organization if they are rewarded adequately and have high motivation to perform. A practical point of view has been adopted to analyze these factors for healthcare professionals and it leads to the conclusion of the existence of high-stress environments and prevailing exhaustion rates that emphasize the need for a motivation study.

The labor-intensive nature of healthcare workers has been recognized by the authors and the value created by motivation on outcomes in healthcare has been researched in-depth. Organizations need awareness about factors that will directly impact the motivation of healthcare employees, so their efforts can be channeled to increase motivation levels, as low motivation leads to low employee morale, staff shortages, decreased engagement, and an overall negative impact on patient care. The authors established the direct impact motivation has on the variables in their study thus implying that healthcare organizations are in the need to shift their focus to motivating their employees to yield overall positive outcomes. Motivation must be a bottom-up approach focusing on the welfare of employees, creating organizational policies based on employee perspectives as employees are crucial internal stakeholders who must be recognized by factoring in supervision controls, providing autonomy, flexibility in work training, and growth amongst other financial benefits.

Casey et al. have conducted a recent study to map the motivation levels of healthcare workers before and during the pandemic, researching with the aid of the job diagnostic survey (JDS). The study aimed to identify specific motivation factors based on the job characteristics at an uncertain time, especially difficult for healthcare workers. Professionals have exhibited depression, stress, and demotivation due to reasons like their inability to save all the COVID-19 patients at the time of the pandemic when the US lost many lives to the disease. The study has incorporated an interesting approach as healthcare was vastly affected during the pandemic, in terms of limited resources and high demand leading to severe burnout to the employees that significantly affected the motivation scores. The results also provide insightful suggestions to improve motivation scores for the employees and the authors plan to conduct a future study to research post-pandemic motivation scores for hospital employees.

Research Method

A stratified random sampling technique was employed to ensure diverse participants of Job roles, tenures, and departmental divisions within a North Texas healthcare organization. The study utilized a modified version of the Hackman and Oldham Job Diagnostic Survey as a primary instrument to examine specific healthcare scenarios. Surveys were distributed electronically to increase accessibility and response rates, with bi-weekly reminders.

To further elucidate, descriptive statistics and multiple regression analysis were utilized to investigate the relationships between job characteristics and motivational outcomes, thereby identifying the most influential factors and the mechanisms through which job design affects motivation, we conducted mediation analyses focusing on job satisfaction and employee engagement.

Study and Data Collection

The study investigated the dynamics of healthcare office workers in a North Texas Hospital using a mixed data collection (qualitative and quantitative) methodology to examine the motivational potential of healthcare office workers using Hackman and Oldham's Job Characteristics Model. The total population was 300 employees, among which a sample was selected based on their tenure in the organization, and their role in the system office department. Physicians, nurses, and professionals who work directly with patients were excluded from this study as motivating factors and the nature of jobs substantially vary for both groups. The study uses a five-point Likert scale to measure intrinsic factors impacting motivation, and job satisfaction and reflect healthcare office workers' perceptions of these job characteristics in their roles. Overall, the research seeks to identify which aspects of job design could be improved to enhance employee motivation in healthcare administration workers.

Key concepts

Studies have revealed that the organization's success is deeply anchored by its workforce, who function as a backbone to support daily operations that proceed smoothly and without interruptions. The healthcare work setting is not any different, though healthcare administration workers perform tasks that are behind the scenes, their role directly impacts the quality of patient care. Therefore, due to the importance of their responsibilities, understanding the factors contributing to the motivation of healthcare administration workers is extremely pivotal (Ali et al., 2014).

Motivation is conceptualized as an inherent drive or desire that compels an individual toward a goal. In a healthcare work environment, motivation is influenced by multifaceted parameters of work dynamics including work performance, pay, status, personal characteristics, work relationships, autonomy, organizational identification, training, and the meaningfulness of work. Additionally, in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, the recent shift towards hybrid and remote work arrangements has significantly contributed to the motivation of employees in the healthcare sector. For example, the transition to remote work amplified the autonomy of healthcare administration workers providing them flexibility in managing their work. Contrarily, physical separation from the workplace dilutes the sense of completeness in tasks, impacts work relationships due to a lack of employee engagement, and weakens interpersonal interactions essential to patient care which subsequently affects the quality of patient care. A case study related to "Workplace Conflict and the Productivity of Employees in the Healthcare Sector" revealed that employees with high levels of engagement can lead to improved job satisfaction and performance, which is a contributing factor to employee motivation. From a healthcare perspective, patient care is paramount, and high levels of engagement can lead to improved job satisfaction and performance, thereby contributing to better patient care and organizational effectiveness (Francis Ezieshi Monyei et al., 2023).

Hackman and Oldham's Job Characteristics Model

Hackman and Oldham's Job characteristics model is based on the key to sustaining motivation is the job itself (Luenendonk, 2019) where five characteristics influence Job satisfaction and are:

1. Skill variety: Skill variety is characterized by the degree to which a role/job requires a diverse array of activities to fulfill a responsibility involving the use of employees' proficiencies and competencies. In healthcare administration settings, such skill variety may involve a series of task executions varying from insurance claims processing to patient healthcare management and assisting with medical coding practices.

2. Task identity: Task identity is characterized by the degree to which a role/job requires the completion of discrete and identifiable pieces of work. In other words, completing a task from start to finish with a tangible outcome. For healthcare administration workers, enhancing task identity could be fostered by allowing them to oversee a patient's administrative journey from admission to discharge.

3. Task significance: Task significance pertains to a measure in which a job exerts a substantial influence on the lives or work of others, including both individuals within the organization and the broader societal context. The roles and responsibilities performed by healthcare administration workers are inherently significant as they directly impact patient care and satisfaction.

4. Autonomy: Autonomy is the level of freedom and discretion granted to the employees in managing the work. A high degree of autonomy could enable healthcare administration workers to manage their schedules autonomously or to innovate systems for patient follow-up.

5. Feedback: Feedback in the work setting focuses on receiving direct and unambiguous information regarding the efficacy of their work performance. For those employed in healthcare office roles, feedback mechanisms might include patient satisfaction surveys, direct commentary from patients, or systematic performance evaluations (Ali et al., 2014).

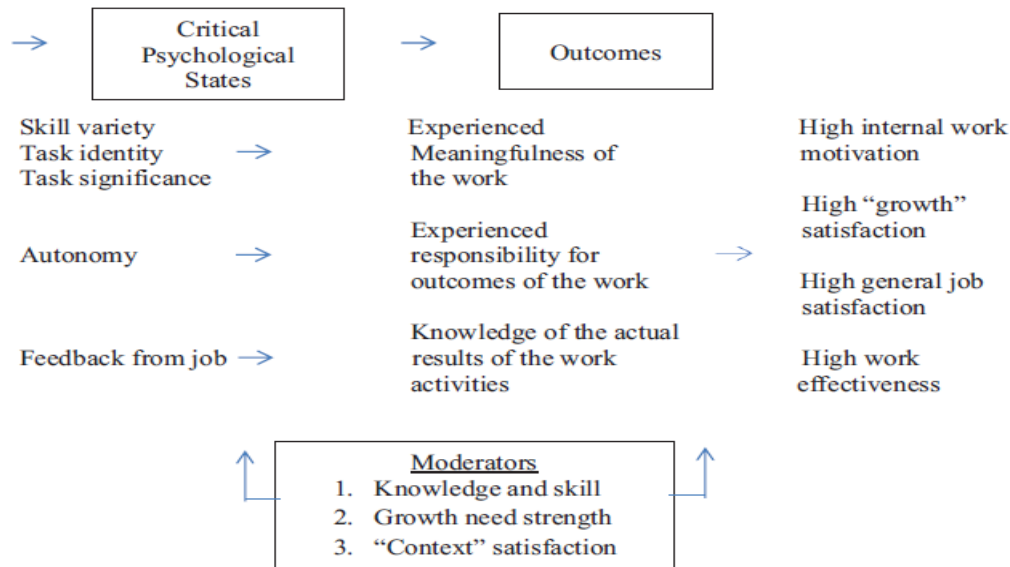


Figure 2: The characteristics Model (Hackman and Oldham, 1980: 1990)

Source: Casey, R., Palla, N., & Palla, K. (2022). employee motivation before and during covid-19 pandemic: the case of a small rural hospital. *International Journal of Business & Public Administration*, 19(1).

The characteristics impact three critical psychological states:

- Experiencing meaningfulness of the work: Employees are more likely to be satisfied and motivated when they find meaningfulness in their work.
- Experienced responsibility for outcomes of the work: Employees are more invested in their work quality if they are personally responsible for outcomes.
- Knowledge of the actual results of the work activities: Understanding how one's work contributes to the product or service can increase motivation.
- Motivation Potential Score (MPS) provides a combined estimate of the overall motivational potential of a job, based on the core dimensions of the Job Characteristics Model (Sonnentag, 2017).

Discussion

Several studies have revealed elevated levels of the five characteristics are predicted to lead to high levels of job satisfaction, high quality of work, and therefore, motivation leading to low turnovers. JCM mechanism applied in healthcare settings means greater engagement, deeper commitment, and overall enhancement in the functioning facility (Karaferis et al., 2022). Healthcare administration workers experience a deep sense of meaningfulness, responsibility, and fulfillment when self-aware of their importance due to the vital role they play within the healthcare system. Healthcare office workers who witness the tangible outcomes of their efforts are likely to experience increased job satisfaction and a greater desire to continue contributing positively to the healthcare environment (Cantarelli et al., 2023). The Job characteristic model is the theoretical foundation for examining how job design affects employee motivation across different sectors, including healthcare and hospitality. Due to the same, multiple studies have revealed applying the Hackman and Oldham JCM across healthcare sectors provides valuable insights into employee motivation (Ali et al., 2014). While certain job characteristics are universally motivating, others have industry-specific impacts. For healthcare leaders, understanding these nuances is essential for designing jobs that not only enhance motivation and satisfaction but also support superior patient care. As workplace dynamics continue to evolve, especially in the post-pandemic era, leveraging these insights will be crucial for attracting, motivating, and retaining talented employees in high-stress and high-stakes industries like healthcare.

Results

The total number of healthcare office workers who participated in the study accounts for 25. The demographic factors include age, gender, professional capacity, educational status, and years of experience. The study reveals Skill Variety (SV) is 3.55, Task Identity (TI) is 3.59, Task Significance (TS) is 4.14, Autonomy (AU) is 3.20, and Feedback (FB) is 3.42. The Motivating Potential Score (MPS) is 41.15 which indicates that the job falls under the category of moderate to high motivating potential. The higher MPS score implies the job's potential to motivate the employees is greater and leads to positive outcomes such as better performances, increased job satisfaction, reduced turnover rates, and overall, higher productivity.

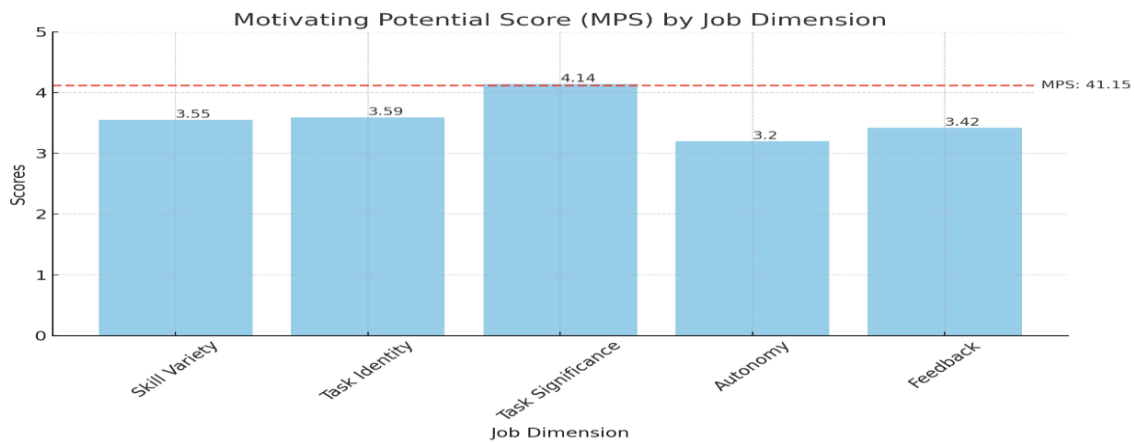


Figure 3: Results depicting job dimension vs scores and Motivation Potential scores.

Findings

The study notably unveils divergent levels of perceptions across the job characteristics model by Hackman and Oldham with Task Significance (TS) scoring the highest at 4.14 which indicates a strong awareness of the employee's roles in impacting patient care and satisfaction. This is a positive indicator of the employees being aware of the significance they play in ensuring seamless patient care and delivering superior service to patients, the management has been an effective communicator of the 'service mindset' that is required for healthcare professionals to succeed in their roles, and the employees also identify with their roles leading to a high score in TS. On the contrary, Autonomy (AU) is identified as the relative area for improvement with a score of 3.20 and a low AU score suggests the opportunities to increase decision-making freedom for the employees. Upon discussing with the respondents and their managers, there have been requests for a hybrid work setting and flexible schedules which was being reviewed by the leaders; employees acknowledged that other industries provide more flexibility to their workers to work from home, or have balanced in-office and remote work settings, whereas the current employer has mandated in office work for all administrative workers with an option of working from home for only one day in two weeks. This led to dissatisfaction among employees as they perceived less autonomy in their roles. The Motivating Potential Score (MPS) of 41.15 implies the job of the healthcare office workers lies within a moderate to high motivation range which emphasizes the criticality of job design in fostering employee motivation. The findings of the study highlight the correlation between the motivational level of healthcare office workers and job characteristics emphasizing the potential to redesign the targeted jobs to improve motivation and Job satisfaction and institutional efficacy in a healthcare setting.

Limitations

Despite the revelations, the study encounters certain limitations. The study was conducted in a single healthcare institution in North Texas and was unable to collect data from other organizations due to hospital privacy policies, preventing the acquisition of data from a wide range of healthcare facilities. The data collection hindrance limits the generalizability of findings in comparison to different healthcare environments across multiple organizations. Similarly, the results may vary across different geographical

locations that have certain advantages and disadvantages that might lead to varied scores. Furthermore, the study's cross-sectional design precludes the ability to establish causality between levels of motivation and Job characteristics.

Recommendations

Future research could incorporate longitudinal designs and gather data from diverse healthcare settings to enhance the applicability and robustness of findings. For the current study, employees were not differentiated into managerial and non-managerial roles as the motivation factors may vary for both groups in terms of significance and autonomy, future studies that document the role type may uncover new findings.

Conclusion

The study aimed to assess the job characteristics influencing the worker's motivation, job satisfaction, and performance. The study's goal is to identify effective strategies to sustain talent among healthcare office workers versus the strategies requiring refinement. By collecting data, the study was able to discover the strategies for job redesign and organizational intervention that could boost the motivation of healthcare administrators which will positively influence the quality of patient care, healthcare delivery proficiency, employee retention, and overall exhaustive adeptness. As the healthcare industry continues to evolve, especially in the wake of the pandemic, leveraging these insights becomes indispensable for attracting, motivating, and retaining skilled professionals in the high-demand healthcare sector.

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Appendix 1 - Survey instrument

Skills Application 4.2 Job Diagnostic Survey

Hackman and Oldham developed a self-reporting instrument for managers to use in diagnosing their work environment. The first step in calculating the "motivating potential score" (MPS) of your job is to complete the following questionnaire.

1. Use the scales below to indicate whether each statement is an accurate or inadequate description of your present or most recent job. After completing the instrument, please return to the researcher.

5=Very descriptive

4=Mostly descriptive

3= Somewhat descriptive

2=Mostly nondescriptive

1=Very nondescriptive

- ___ 1. I have almost complete responsibility for deciding how and when the work is to be done.
- ___ 2. I have a chance to do a number of different tasks, using a wide variety of different skills and talents.
- ___ 3. I do a complete task from start to finish. The results of my efforts are clearly visible and identifiable.
- ___ 4. What I do affects the well-being of other people in very important ways.
- ___ 5. My manager provides me with constant feedback about how I am doing.
- ___ 6. The work itself provides me with information about how well I am doing.
- 7. I make insignificant contributions to the final product or service.
- ___ 8. I get to use a number of complex skills on this job.
- ___ 9. I have very little freedom in deciding how the work is to be done.
- ___ 10. Just doing the work provides me with opportunities to figure out how the work is to be done.
- ___ 11. The job is quite simple and repetitive.
- ___ 12. My supervisors or coworkers rarely give me feedback on how well I am doing the job.
- ___ 13. What I do is of little consequence to anyone else.
- ___ 14. My job involves doing a number of different tasks.
- ___ 15. Supervisors let us know how well they think we are doing.
- ___ 16. My job is arranged so that I do not have a chance to do an entire piece of work from beginning to end.
- ___ 17. My job does not allow me an opportunity to use discretion or participate in decision making.
- ___ 18. The demands of my job are highly routine and predictable.
- ___ 19. My job provides few clues about whether I'm performing adequately.
- ___ 20. My job is not very important to the company's survival.
- ___ 21. My job gives me considerable freedom in doing the work.
- ___ 22. My job provides me with the chance to finish completely any work I start.
- ___ 23. Many people are affected by the job I do.
-