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## Job Characteristics and Job Satisfaction Among Employees: A Case Study At Craun Research Sdn. Bhd., Kuching, Sarawak

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### Abstract

In many organizations today a lot of employees complaining about having no time, experiencing job stress, burnout and even to the lengths of quitting their job. By looking at a series of elements of job characteristics, this study may result to the reasons as to why employees behave the way they are. The elements were skill variety, task identity, task significance and autonomy. The results were gathered from 92 returned and useable questionnaires based on all 99 employees at Craun Research Sdn. Bhd., with a 92% response rate. Kuching, Sarawak. All variables have very good internal consistencies. It was found that job characteristics are significantly correlated with job satisfaction with the highest correlation is between task identity and job satisfaction. It means that employees were aware that in order to find the satisfaction they seek, they need to know whether or not there was meaningfulness in their job and in what they do. Managers, personnel and supervisor need to help employees find meaning in their work in order for the employee to grow and perform. With good management over employees' well-being, it was believed not only it improved on productivity in employees work but it also help to create a character within the employees' itself so that they will be more efficient in their work and multitasking. This research also provides managerial implications as well as suggestions for future researches.

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### INTRODUCTION

Good management over employees' well-being will not only improve on productivity of work but it will also help to create a character within the employees' so that they will be more efficient in their work and multitasking. Negative factors should be taken into consideration by administrators and policy makers to assist in improving the satisfaction level and decreasing employee turnover. It is important to alleviate factors that are potential into decrease the level of job satisfaction, and ultimately to improve staff retention (Raddaha et al., 2012). Yasuaki, Chiba, Yoshioka, Yasuyuki, Yoshihiko, Toshihiro, Yoshihiko, Higashiguchi and Takahiko (2014) found that working long hours with no days off, overtime sessions and night duty contributed to job stress and affected the employees' well-being. The same study also found that high job strain could result the employee to develop symptoms such as depression and burnout (Yasuaki et al., 2014). Employees who were

satisfied with their jobs showed a good mental health record and a satisfied employee were less likely to leave their job (Williams, Konrad, Sheckler, Pathman, Linzer, McMurray, Gerrity, & Schwartz, 2010). By understanding the well-being of employees helped to prevent burnout, improve the quality services they provide to their clients, reduce work errors, thus, it will improve satisfaction and regardless of what is done. The objectives of this study were to determine the relationship between job characteristics among employees at Craun Research Sdn. Bhd., Kuching, Sarawak.

#### *Literature Review*

Each of the jobs characteristics were explained in more detail using the job characteristics model by Hackman and Oldham (1980). The elements explained were supported based on previous studies from past researchers in relation to the topic. As for job satisfaction, a few elements from job characteristics that contribute to job satisfaction was also explained and supported by previous studies.

#### *Job Satisfaction*

Job satisfaction generally, has been defined as a pleasurable emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job or job experiences these positive feeling resulted from the perception of one's job as fulfilling or allowing the fulfilment of one's important job values, provided these values were compatible with one's needs according to Locke (1976). Employees who were satisfied with their jobs had relatively low intentions to leave their companies for other employment (Valentine, Godkin, Fleischman, & Kidwel, 2011). On other note, McShane (2013) believed that employees who earned higher pay tend to perform better because higher income makes them feeling more valued within the organization. However, if the employees were given autonomy but for a small scale task, they may have limited control in their area of expertise, thus will feel useless in their position and may look for another challenging position in other organization (Coelho & Augusto, 2010, as cited in Ali et al., 2013).

#### *Job Characteristics*

Job Characteristics could be understood more by using the Job Characteristics model of work motivation created by Richard Hackman and Greg Oldham (1980). The model consisted of five different elements in which was *skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy* and *feedback*. McShane (2013) stated that employees who experienced these psychological state tend to experienced a higher level of internal work motivation, job satisfaction and work effectiveness. Under the right situation, employees were more motivated and satisfied when jobs had higher level of these characteristics (McShane, 2013).

#### *Skill Variety*

Skill variety refers to the extent of employee using different skills and talents to perform specific task within their job (McShane, 2013). Training and personal development was found to be the most important factor towards employee satisfaction (Turkyilmaz, Akman, Ozkan, & Pastuszak, 2011). Lewis, Lim & Ling (2012) claimed that the main purpose of having training and development was to increase employees' knowledge and skills. Missing skill sets should be determined and new training should be scheduled to fulfill these gaps.

#### *Task Identity*

It involves with the requirements of the job as completion of a whole and recognizable piece of work in which, doing a job from beginning to end with noticeable outcome (McShane, 2013). The work might consist of the employee to assemble an entire broadband modem rather than the employee just doing welding the motherboard (McShane, 2013). It means all of the activities associated in a task must be completed and the results must be satisfactory.

#### *Task Significance*

It refers to the degree to which the job has a significant impact on the lives or work of others, whether inside the organization or the outside environment (McShane, 2013). Employees who engaged in activities and behaviors which contradict their values tend to feel anxiety, stress, and a sense of self-rejection to the extent they believe they acted against their values because of environmental or situational influences resulted that they would likely feel dissatisfied with the environment and want to leave it (Festinger, 1957; Kaplan, 1983; Hobfoll, 1989, as cited in Protass et al., 2013).

#### *Autonomy*

Autonomy provided motivation because having more freedom makes doing the work more interesting (McShane, 2013). However, Coelho and Augusto (2010) as cited in Ali, Said, Yunus, Kader, Latif and Munap (2013) found that if the employees were given autonomy but for only small scale of task, they might become constrained and their expertise was to be In contrast to the above statement, according to Lewis, Lim and Ling (2012), by giving employees a chance to be involved in making crucial decisions was also significantly

correlated to job satisfaction. Employees given the chance to be involved in making crucial decisions felt empowered and felt a sense of their importance to the firm.

*Conceptual Framework*

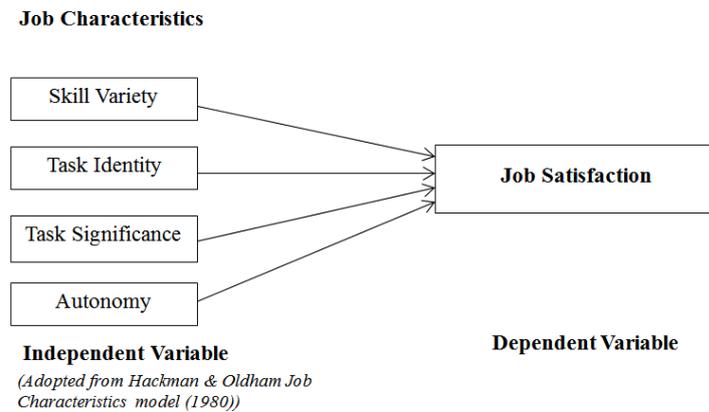


Fig. 1 Conceptual Framework

**METHODOLOGY**

This study was correlational research. A non - probability sampling by the means of convenience sampling was applied in this study. The sampling frame was taken from the Human Resource Department at Craun Research Sdn. Bhd., Kuching. The number of population participated in this study was a total of 99 employees. The researcher distributed 100 questionnaires to the employees of Craun Research Sdn. Bhd., Kuching, Sarawak and managed to get 99 returned questionnaires.

*Results*

The aim of this study was to find out whether there was a relationship between Job Characteristics and Job Satisfaction among employees at Craun Research Sdn. Bhd. Another objective was to find out and determine the elements of Job Characteristics that contributes to Job Satisfaction. A series of hypothesis were answered. After data cleaning had been done, only 92 questionnaires were valid and used. Table I shows the demographic profile of respondents:

TABLE I  
DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

Particular	Description	Frequency
Sex	Male	47
	Female	45
<b>Total</b>		<b>92</b>
Age	18 - 25	1
	26 - 33	33
	34 - 41	32
	42 - 49	20
	50 years and above	6
<b>Total</b>		<b>92</b>
Department	Downstream Tech	25
	Upstream Tech	20
	Tech Commercialization	13
	Corporate Affairs	34
<b>Total</b>		<b>92</b>
Length of Service	1 - 5 years	33
	6 - 10 years	37
	11 - 15 years	15
	More than 15 years	7
<b>Total</b>		<b>92</b>

*Normality Test*

Normality of data can be seen through skewness and kurtosis. The results showed the skewness and kurtosis for each independent variables and dependent variables. For the skewness and kurtosis for job characteristics, autonomy resulted the highest score with the skewness of (-.5.90), followed by skill variety (-.408), task significance (-.161), and Task identity (-.012). According to Salkind (2014), the range of normal data distribution was between -3 to +3 and this concludes that the data for each variable were normally distributed.

TABLE II  
NORMALITY FOR JOB CHARACTERISTICS AND JOB SATISFACTION

Variables	Skewness	Kurtosis
<b>Job Characteristics:</b>		
Skill Variety	-.408	-1.388
Task Identity	-.012	-1.032
Task Significance	-.161	-1.151
Autonomy	-.590	-.233
<b>Job Satisfaction</b>	.337	-1.640

*Descriptive Statistics*

Table II shows the results of mean for skill variety which scored the highest (M=4.56, SD=.417) followed by Autonomy (M=4.30, SD=.627), Task Significance (M=4.20, SD=.593). The lowest score was task identity (M=4.10, SD=.533) while job satisfaction has average score (M=4.28, SD=.504). Based on the results it can be concluded that for all elements in job characteristics are high with a score of more than 4.00 and above.

TABLE III  
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS MEAN FOR JOB CHARACTERISTICS AND JOB SATISFACTION

Variables	Mean	Std. Deviation
Skill Variety	4.56	.417
Task Identity	4.10	.533
Task Significance	4.20	.593
Autonomy	4.30	.627
Job Satisfaction	4.28	.504

*Data Reliability*

Salkind (2014) stated that reliability coefficient ranging from .0 to 1.0 is considered reliable. Sekaran and Bougie (2011) stated that reliability with scores less than .600 was considered as poor and items that scored .700 and above are considered good. Nunnally (1976) mentioned that the Cronbach's alpha .600 was sufficient to be an acceptable value for research purpose. Therefore, for the purpose of this study, the minimum acceptable value of .600 for Cronbach's Alpha was used. Below are the table 4.14 shows the reliability of Cronbach's Alpha for job characteristics and job satisfaction. Each of the variables in job characteristics consisted of 5 number of items. For job satisfaction there are 13 items all together. Based on the results it can be concluded that the overall items were reliable with a score of more than .600 in value. Based on the information in Table IV, for job characteristics, autonomy scored the highest with Cronbach alpha value of (.951). Task significance scored (.926) making it the second highest, whereas Skill variety (.872) and Task Identity (.645). For task significance, autonomy and job satisfaction, the Cronbach alpha exceeds more than .800.

TABLE IV  
CRONBACH'S ALPHA FOR JOB CHARACTERISTICS AND JOB SATISFACTION

Variables	N of Items (n=33)	Cronbach's Alpha (n=92)
<b>Job Characteristics</b>		
Skill Variety	5	.872
Task Identity	5	.645
Task Significance	5	.926
Autonomy	5	.951
<b>Job Satisfaction</b>	13	.959

### Correlation

The result indicated that there is relationship between job characteristics and job satisfaction. This is because the results were (.667<sup>\*\*</sup>,  $p < 0.01$ ). A study by Krishnan, Omar, Ismail, Alias, Hamid, Ghani and Kanchymalay (2010) found that job satisfaction had a positive relationship for all the three motivational job characteristics elements that they were researching upon (autonomy, skill variety, and task significance). This is supported by Anderson, 1984; Colarelli, Dean and Konstans, 1987 in Ali et al., (2014). It was found that is a significant relationship between the situational variables of autonomy, skill variety, task identity and task significance, and job satisfaction thus support of the hypothesis there is relationship between job characteristics and job satisfaction.

Although skill variety scored the lowest, it was still significant resulted with the significant level of ( $r = .272^{**}$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). A previous research done by LeBlanc (2013), in her findings she also said that there was a strong positive relationship between perceived job satisfaction and skill variety, ( $r = .531$ ,  $p < .001$ .) thus supporting this finding. This was supported by Lewis et al. (2012) that the main purpose of having training and development was to increase employees' knowledge and skills. Trainings are systematic development of the knowledge, skills, and expertise required by a person to effectively perform a given task or job (Patrick, 2000; as cited in Lewis and Lim et al., 2012). The findings from Ali et al., (2014) also supported this finding in which the relationship between skill variety and job satisfaction were resulted weak. It can be assumed that the positive impact created by the existence of the job satisfaction were believed to be supporting and serves as an encouragement for employees to remain carrying out the task assigned to them, thus contributing towards organizational effectiveness (Ali et al., 2014).

For task identity, the score was ( $r = .688^{**}$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) which is positively related to job satisfaction. Task Identity scored the highest significant level among all the variables in job characteristics in this research. Task identity encouraged the sentiment that the job was meaningful and worthwhile thus motivating the employee to work smart (Ali et al., 2014). Task Significance scored the second highest among the other three variables in job characteristics in which the  $r$  value shows positive and moderate relationship with job satisfaction ( $r = .571^{**}$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). LeBlanc (2013,) said that there is a relationship between task significance and job satisfaction ( $r = .503$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

Autonomy scored ( $r = .550^{**}$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) is the third highest variable. This result is consistent with LeBlanc (2013). Nonetheless, the result still shows that there is a relationship between autonomy and job satisfaction. A study done by Pinto and Moura (2012) supported the fact that the elements in job characteristics that have least to do with job satisfaction was autonomy and they also added that the issues with lower scores are related to the freedom of initiative, autonomy, and external valuation of the job. The researcher agreed with LeBlanc (2013) as it could be assumed that autonomy was a significant development for an organization because as it was very difficult to increase autonomy to enhance satisfaction. Table IV shows the correlation value between all elements.

TABLE IV  
CORRELATION BETWEEN SKILL VARIETY, TASK IDENTITY, TASK SIGNIFICANCE, AUTONOMY AND JOB SATISFACTION

Variables	1	2	3	4	5
1. Skill Variety	1	.322 <sup>**</sup>	.485 <sup>**</sup>	.469 <sup>**</sup>	.272 <sup>**</sup>
2. Task Identity		1	.581 <sup>**</sup>	.568 <sup>**</sup>	.688 <sup>**</sup>
3. Task Significance			1	.630 <sup>**</sup>	.571 <sup>**</sup>
4. Autonomy				1	.550 <sup>**</sup>
5. Job Satisfaction					1

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

### Implications and Conclusions

Based on the results of this study, it is found that there is a relationship between job characteristics and job satisfaction. Employees who were treated better tended to perform well in their work. Employees should be encouraged to be honest about their line of work or job description. The researchers also suggest that the right placement of employees will bring prosperity and happiness to a company and its people. It applies not only to managers, supervisors or personnel but the entire organization. The right placement of people cannot be implemented without employees understanding. The key to an organization's success lies in whether their

managers chose to view their employees as competent or incompetent. If they are given jobs that they do not have any knowledge, skills or the ability of their interest to do in, they should inform their supervisors and manager. This could save the organization from a great deal of losses. The employees and managers need to recognize that it is their responsibility to support one another. The results may help them to improve and boost management autonomy within the organization. Employee who found satisfaction in their work attains optimum performance, and the work that they produce becomes excellent.

Other than that, it is also important to maintain an atmosphere where the young and the senior employees can always freely express his or her opinions and work comfortably. Employees, if treated better, they tend to perform well in their work. It is important for employees to learn set of skills in order to grow. For example, in the market today, having skills related to technology is essential. By sending the employees for training may help them to polish their skills. On the other hand, the types of training given are to be carefully selected and evaluated. This perspective may seem unimportant but the organization might find the secrets of effective management. Managers should bear in mind and design appropriate training that suit the need of the employees. Organization needed to help their employees realized the importance of their job and help them find significant value in their work. Be it employees or managers, both must also avoid making assumptions that may bring the organization to ruin. Aside from that, managers and supervisors need to remind employees of how their work was valued by customers. Helping the employees finding the greater good in their work will result in motivation. Employees need the motivation in order to lead a healthy work environment. Employees should be encouraged to exercise independent and autonomous management based on their experience, judgement, and analysis. Employees also needed to accept criticism from managers and supervisors. Criticisms provide rooms for improvement and growth. Employees should be encouraged to cherish such opportunities, and be grateful when their supervisors and managers pointed out their errors as it was a part of learning process. Instead of asking employees to make big changes to the way they act, managers could also use strategies that can encourage employees to make changes in their own perspective. Consistent and positive nourishment increases creative thoughts to build confidence and commitment could lead to ideas and problem solving method that could be applied in service of the organization.

#### *Suggestions for Future Researches*

The researchers suggest that this research could also be done in other dimensions of job characteristics and job satisfaction in order to add in depth boy of knowledge to stakeholders. It would be an interesting to explore the relationship within other areas as well as aside from an organizational perspective such the quality of work life, regulations from the government as well as job stress. Future research can take further assessment to other fields such as banking, marketing, education, engineering and so on.

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