Job characteristics, work attitudes and behaviors in a non-western context
Distributive justice as a mediator

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Abstract
Purpose – Previous studies on job characteristics have been performed mainly in Western contexts. More empirical evidence is needed to understand the important job characteristics of positive job outcomes in a non-Western context. Therefore, this research has two objectives: to assess the impact of five job characteristics on work attitudes and behaviors in the UAE, and to test the mediating impact of distributive justice on the job characteristics-work outcomes relationship.

Design/methodology/approach – The study reports responses of 350 employees from five large organizations operating in Dubai. Data were collected on a structured questionnaire containing standards scales of job characteristics, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, turnover intentions, distributive justice, and some demographic variables. After testing scales reliability and validity, the proposed linear relationships were tested using a series of separate hierarchical regression analyses. Proposed mediation hypotheses were tested using Baron and Kenny’s recommendations.

Findings – Consistent with studies conducted in a Western context, the study showed that skill variety and feedback have functional impacts on job satisfaction, organizational commitment and turnover intentions. Contrary to Western studies, the study reported that task identity and task significance have functional effects on work attitudes and behaviors. Autonomy also showed unexpected positive relationship with turnover intentions. Additionally, distributive justice mediates some of the relationships between job characteristics and work outcomes.

Research limitations/implications – The limitations of common method bias and cross-sectional data are discussed in the light of implications for future research. Nevertheless, the results provide new insights on the influence of job characteristics on work outcomes in a non-Western context of the UAE. Also, the study reported evidence for the mediating impact of distributive justice on the job characteristics-work outcomes relationship.

Practical implications – The study has implications for enhancing work behaviors and attitudes. In general, enhancing certain job characteristics can result in higher-level employee outcomes. Also, managers should improve some of the contextual factor (i.e. distributive justice) in order to enhance the impact of job characteristics on work outcomes.

Originality/value – The study is considered to be one of the first to examine the job characteristics-work outcomes relationship in a non-western context of the UAE. Also, it is among the first studies to test the role of distributive justice as a mediator for the job characteristics-work outcome relationship.

Keywords Job descriptions, Attitudes, Behaviour, United Arab Emirates

Paper type Research paper
Introduction

There is an established body of knowledge supporting the idea that certain jobs can enhance performance. It is experienced that well-designed jobs can have a positive impact on work attitudes and behaviors. Thus, job design takes on special importance in today’s human resource management. It is essential to design jobs so that stress can be reduced, motivation can be enhanced, and satisfaction of employees and their performance can be improved so that organizations can effectively compete in the global marketplace.

Many theorists and researchers argued that enriching the employee’s job leads to improve employee attitudes and behaviors (e.g., Hackman and Lawler, 1971; Hackman and Oldham, 1980; Hackman et al., 1975; Umstot et al., 1976). One of the most recognized models for this job redesign and enhancement approach is the Job Characteristics Model (JCM) (Hackman and Oldham, 1975). Hackman and Oldham’s (1975) JCM identified five main job characteristics, namely: skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback. The core job characteristics are followed by three critical psychological states: experienced meaningfulness, experienced responsibility, and knowledge of results. In turn, the critical psychological states are responsible for increased work satisfaction, internal work motivation, performance and reduced absence and employee turnover (Garg and Rastogi, 2006).

Studies have established a connection between how employees view their jobs and the various outcomes measure. Many studies showed that characteristics of the job are primary determinants of work outcomes (e.g., Bhuian and Menguc, 2002; Champoux, 1991; Dodd and Ganster, 1996; Evans et al., 2002; Garg and Rastogi, 2006; Kulik et al., 1987; Singh, 1998; Thomas et al., 2004).

The purpose of this study is to examine the effects of job characteristics on work attitudes and behaviors. Also, the study investigates the mediating impact of distributive justice on the job characteristics-work outcomes relationship. Previous studies on job design and redesign have been performed mainly in Western countries. There are few studies on the job characteristics-work outcomes relationship conducted in a non-Western context. Therefore, the relationship between job characteristics and work outcomes need to be further examined in a non-Western context. This study is one of the first studies in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to investigate the relation of the job characteristics to work outcomes.

Job characteristics

During the last three decades a large amount of research on employees’ attitudes and behaviors to job characteristics has been reported in the literature. At present, JCM is one of the theoretical perspectives dominating the area. The model suggests that objectives facets or attributes of individual’s jobs primarily determine their perceptions of and responses to jobs (Hackman and Oldham, 1975). The model assumes that jobs can be described in terms of a set of predetermined objective attributes, dimensions, or characteristics. Also, the theory presumes that the high level of those dimensions of jobs lead to high levels of satisfaction, motivation, and performance, and to low levels of absenteeism, and turnover among employees (Ferris and Gilmore, 1984; Griffin et al., 1987).

Moreover, motivation theorists suggest that job design approach moves away from the development of high fractionalized, repetitious, and programmed jobs toward
eliciting intrinsic reward from work effort. Hackman and Oldham’s (1975) JCM identified five core job characteristics, namely: skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback.

**Skill variety**
Skill variety is described as “the degree to which a job requires a variety of different activities in carrying out the work, which involve the use of a number of different skills and talents of the employee” (Hackman and Oldham, 1975, p. 161). Empirical studies suggested that skill variety is one of the best predictor of job satisfaction (Becherer et al., 1982; Glission and Durick, 1988) and that organizational commitment is greater among those who possess a variety of job skills (Glission and Durick, 1988; Hunt et al., 1985).

**Task identity**
Task identity is “the degree to which the job requires completion of a whole and identifiable piece of work, i.e. doing a job from start to finish with a visible outcome (Hackman and Oldham, 1975, p. 161). Previous studies suggested that task identity has seldom emerged as strong predictors of work outcomes (e.g., Dodd and Ganster, 1996; Snyder et al., 1982; Stone, 1986).

**Task significance**
Task significance is “the degree to which the job has a substantial impact on the lives or work of other people-whether in the immediate organization or in the external environment” (Hackman and Oldham, 1975, p. 161). Empirical research has found task significance to be positively related to job satisfaction (Becherer et al., 1982; Glission and Durick, 1988; Katz and Kahn, 1978; Kulik et al., 1988) and organizational commitment (Glission and Durick, 1988).

**Autonomy**
Hackman and Oldham (1975, p. 162) described autonomy as “the degree to which the job provides substantial freedom, independence, and discretion to the employee in scheduling the work and in determining the procedures to be used in carrying it out”. Several empirical studies have found autonomy to be significantly related to commitment (Agarwal and Ramaswami, 1993; Hunt et al., 1985; Losocco, 1989; Rabinowtitz et al., 1977), performance (Hackman and Oldham, 1975); and job satisfaction (Becherer et al., 1982; Katz and Kahn, 1978; Kulik et al., 1988).

**Feedback**
Supervisor feedback has been defined as “the degree to which the employee receives clear information about his or her performance” (Hackman and Oldham, 1975, p. 162). Bassett (1994) argued that feedback is the most effective device for improving performance. Empirical research has shown that supervisor feedback is an important predictor of employees’ job satisfaction (Churchill et al., 1976; Teas and Horrell, 1981; Teas et al., 1979; Becherer et al., 1982), is positively related to commitment (Agarwal and Ramaswami, 1993; Hunt et al., 1985; Johlke et al., 2000; Moch et al., 1979; Porter and Steers, 1973), and is negatively related to role ambiguity (Agarwal and Ramaswami, 1993; Teas, 1983).
The rational for the influence of the job characteristics is based on notions of motivation. Theorists focusing on the effects of job characteristics have argued that the characteristics of jobs can establish conditions which will enhance the intrinsic motivation of workers (Hackman and Oldham, 1975). In particular, it has been suggested that the higher a job scores on each of these characteristics, the better the job is and the higher the motivation, performance, and satisfaction of the person executing this job will be. Therefore, it makes sense to design and improve working environments considering the impact on these characteristics.

**Work attitudes and behaviors**

The work attitudes and behaviors investigated in this study included job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and turnover intentions.

The key conceptual difference between satisfaction, commitment, and turnover is that the first two concepts are employees’ attitudes but turnover refers to an employees’ behavior (Currivan, 2000). Job satisfaction is perhaps the most widely studied work attitudes over the last four decades of organizational studies (Currivan, 2000). Researchers have defined and measured satisfaction both as a global construct and as a concept with different dimensions (Currivan, 2000; Price, 1997). This study used the global approach over the dimensions approach, conceptualizing job satisfaction as the degree of positive emotions an employee has toward a job (Kalleberg, 1977; Locke, 1976; Smith *et al.*, 1969).

Whereas satisfaction means positive emotions toward a particular job, organizational commitment is the degree to which an employee feels loyalty to a particular organization (Mueller *et al.*, 1992; Price, 1997). Similar to Currivan’s (2000) study, this research conceptualized organizational commitment as an affective form of commitment based on feelings of loyalty toward the organization (Allen and Meyer, 1990; Meyer and Allen, 1984; Meyer *et al.*, 1990). Furthermore, this study focuses on commitment to an organization as a whole unit, rather than different subgroups within the organization (Becker, 1992; Becker and Billings, 1992; Reichers, 1985).

Whereas satisfaction and commitment focus on employees attitudes toward their job and organization, turnover refers to actual movement across the membership boundary of an organization (Price, 1997). The specific form of turnover of interest in this study, and most organizational research, is voluntary quits (Bluedorn, 1982; Price, 1997). Since data on employees who quit voluntarily is difficult to collect, researchers often focus on the most direct determinant of turnover, intent to leave (Bluedorn, 1982; Currivan, 2000; Price, 1997). Turnover intentions of employees is a process (Mobley, 1982; Mobley *et al.*, 1978) which comprises constructs of turnover intentions (thinking of quitting, intention to search and intention to quit). Intent to leave has been demonstrated to exert a strong negative influence on actual turnover (Bluedorn, 1982; Mueller *et al.*, 1992; Price and Mueller, 1986).

Few studies on employees behaviors and work outcomes have been conducted in the Middle East in general and in the UAE in particular (e.g., Crossman and Abou-Zaki, 2003; Suliman, 2007; Yousef, 1998, 2000, 2002). For example, Crossman and Abou-Zaki (2003) explored the relationships between socio-demographic variables and job satisfaction facets in the Lebanese banking sector. They found that female employees were significantly more satisfied with pay than their male counterparts, whereas, male employees are reported to be significantly more satisfied with supervision than their
female counterparts. The results indicated that less well-educated staff were least satisfied with jobs. The study also revealed that female employees were found to be more satisfied with pay than their male counterparts, whereas, males were more satisfied with supervision.

In a study conducted in the UAE, Suliman (2007) found positive relationship between education, age, job tenure and job level, and job satisfaction and performance. He concluded that career factors (e.g. job tenure) are more important in predicting job satisfaction and performance than personal factors (e.g. age). The results also indicated that employees working in the private sector are showing higher levels of work performance than the employees of the public sector. Yousef (2002) studied the impact of role stressors on job satisfaction and organizational commitment in the UAE. He found that role conflict and role ambiguity, as source of stress, are negatively related to job satisfaction and organizational commitment. In another study, Yousef (2000) investigated the relationship between leadership behavior and the work outcomes of job satisfaction and job performance in the UAE. Results revealed that employees who perceive their managers as adopting consultative or participative leadership behavior are more committed to their organizations, more satisfied with their jobs and higher in their performance. Yousef (1998) also examined the impact of satisfaction with job security on organizational commitment and job satisfaction in the UAE. The study reported that there is a significant positive relationship between satisfaction with job security and organizational commitment, as well as between satisfaction with job security and performance.

The influence of job characteristics on work attitudes and behaviors
Conceptually, the rationale for the influence of the JCM dimensions is based on notions of motivation and means-end chains. It is generally accepted that the way a job is designed has a substantial impact upon the attitudes, beliefs, and feelings of the employee (Lawler and Hall, 1969).

Hackman and Oldham (1980) argued that job characteristics affect the level of three critical psychological states. Provision of a high level of skill variety, task identity, and task significance in a job leads to a high level of intrinsic motivation because these characteristics enhance the experienced meaningfulness of work (Champoux, 1991; Ilgen and Hollenbeck, 1991). A high level of autonomy is predicted to be most strongly associated with experienced responsibility for work outcomes. A high level of feedback also provides information about the results of work activities and the efficacy of means for achieving desired end goals. As such, feedback provision clarifies the means-end connections (Champoux, 1991; Ilgen and Hollenbeck, 1991), thereby providing motivational potential through experienced responsibility for work outcomes. This motivational potential is believed to result in higher levels of performance and psychological wellbeing for the job incumbent (Hackman and Oldham, 1980).

The JCM dimensions generally are found to significantly influence the behavioral and psychological job outcomes of employees in a Western context. For example, Fried and Ferris (1987) reported correlation between autonomy and satisfaction and performance of 0.34 and 0.14, respectively, and between feedback and satisfaction and performance of 0.29 and 0.15, respectively. Brown and Peterson (1993) reported that greater amounts of feedback, variety, autonomy, and other positive job characteristics are associated with greater job satisfaction. Ramaswami et al. (1993) reported
correlations between variety, autonomy, feedback, participation, and commitment of 0.14, 0.34, 0.40, and 0.48, respectively. For turnover intentions, significant negative relationship has been reported.

Another study conducted by Loher et al. (1985) found significant relationship between job characteristics and job satisfaction. Also, Thomas et al. (2004) reported significant positive relationship between skill variety, autonomy, and feedback and job satisfaction. Additionally, Morrison et al. (2005) found that job designs that provide for high levels of employee control also provide increased opportunities for the development and exercise of skill.

In general, task variety, autonomy, and feedback generally emerge as the most robust correlates of work outcomes in a Western context (e.g., Keller and Holland, 1981; Mowday et al., 1979; O'Brien, 1982; O'Reilly et al., 1980; Snyder et al., 1982; Stone, 1986; Stone and Porter, 1975; Teas, 1981). Task significance and identity have seldom emerged as strong predictors of outcomes in a Western context (e.g., Dodd and Ganster, 1996; Keller and Holland, 1981; Snyder et al., 1982; Stone, 1986).

Given the above results, the research for job characteristics predictors of work attitudes and behaviors has been conducted extensively in a Western context and need to be replicated and tested in a non-Western context. Hence, the purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between job characteristics and work attitudes and behaviors in a non-Western context of the UAE.

Job characteristics, distributive justice, and work outcomes
Organizational justice refers to employees’ perceptions of fair treatment in the workplace (Greenberg, 1990). Theories concerning workplace fairness have focused on expanding conceptualization of fairness to incorporate both distributive and procedural justice (Niehoff and Moorman, 1993). Distributive justice is the degree to which rewards are allocated in an equitable manner. Procedural justice is the degree to which those affected by such allocation decisions perceive them to have been made according to fair methods and guidelines (Greenberg, 1990; Tyler and Bies, 1990).

Skarlicki and Folger (1997) suggested that justice dimensions are capable to function as substitutes for each other and they have shown constantly to be interrelated by number of studies (Elovainio et al., 2002; Skarlicki and Folger, 1997). Furthermore, the effects of justice dimensions on work outcomes have shown to be quite similar (Moorman, 1991). The current study used distributive justice in order to test the mediating role of organizational justice in the job characteristics-work outcomes relationship.

Although there is little empirical research on the relationship between job characteristics and organizational justice, two studies have directly tested the role of organizational justice as mediating factor between autonomy or participation and emotional outcomes. According to Robertson et al. (1999), the effect of participation and joint-decision making on job satisfaction was mediated by organizational justice evaluations. Elovainio et al. (2001) found that organizational justice mediated the effect of job decision latitude on stressful emotions. Also, Elovainio et al. (2004) reported that organizational justice had a mediating role in the relationship between job decision latitude and sickness absence.

Regarding the relationship between organizational justice and work outcomes research has shown that when individual employees’ feel unfairly treated by their
organizations, they respond both affectively (e.g. with lower commitment) and behaviorally (e.g. with increased turnover, theft, decreased citizenship behavior) (Colquitt et al., 2001; Niehoff and Moorman, 1993). In a study conducted in the UAE, Suliman (2007) examined the impact of organizational justice on employees’ satisfaction and performance and tested the mediation role of satisfaction in justice-performance relationship. The study revealed that justice plays a significant role in influencing employees’ satisfaction and performance. The study concluded that interactional justice is the most important justice factor affecting job satisfaction ($r(0.51)$) followed by distributive justice ($r(0.49)$) and procedural justice ($r(0.42)$). The findings also indicated that organizational justice factors played a significant role in predicting work performance. Moreover, only partial mediating role for job satisfaction was found regarding the relationship between justice and performance.

**Model and research hypotheses**

The foregoing literature review suggests the research model presented in Figure 1. The research model employs job characteristics as independent variables and work attitudes and behaviors as dependent variables. The five job characteristics investigated in this study consist of skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback. The three work outcomes investigated in this study include job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and turnover intentions.

Previous research has identified numerous demographic and organizational variables as correlates of job outcomes (e.g., Brown and Peterson, 1993; Buchko et al.,...
In order to control, at least to some extent, their effects, the study included a number of demographic characteristics. The demographic variables are gender, age, tenure in the organization, and salary. In addition to that, previous studies confirmed that workplace justice perceptions lead to positive workplace outcomes (e.g., Colquitt et al., 2001). Thus, organizational procedural justice variable is used as control variable to control its effects.

The model posits that a positive perception on each of job characteristics will impact positively on work outcomes. Hence, the following research hypotheses are suggested:

**H1.** Each job characteristics (i.e. skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback) has a positive relationship with job satisfaction.

**H2.** Each job characteristics (i.e. skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback) has a positive relationship with organizational commitment.

**H3.** Each job characteristics (i.e. skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback) has a negative relationship with turnover intentions.

Additionally, the research model proposed that job characteristics have an indirect effect via organizational procedural justice on work outcomes. The indirect path suggests that distributive justice is a mediator variable in the job characteristics-work outcomes relations. Hence, the following research hypotheses are suggested:

**H4.** Distributive justice will mediate the relationship between each job characteristics (i.e. skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback) and job satisfaction.

**H5.** Distributive justice will mediate the relationship between each job characteristics (i.e. skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback) and organizational commitment.

**H6.** Distributive justice will mediate the relationship between each job characteristics (i.e. skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback) and turnover intentions.

### Methods

**Data and sample**

In order to obtain sufficient heterogeneity to ascertain the stability of the construct relationships, the data was collected from personnel in different functional areas across five different organizations representing service and industrial product organizations in Dubai.

Overall, 350 responses were received for analysis from the sample, for a response rate of 70 percent. As shown in Tables I and II, the respondents’ average age was 2.0 (SD 0.78) (2 = 26 to 35 years), and 46.9 percent were women. Their average tenure in their present organization was 2.21 (SD 1.07) (2 = 2 to 5 years and 3 = 6 to 10 years). The average income of the respondents was 2.53 (SD 1.08) (2 = 5,001 to 10,000 Arab
Emirates Dirham (AED), and $3 = 1,001$ to $15,000$ AED). Note that annual average value of US$1 and 1 Euro in 2007 was 3.76 AED and 5.40 AED, respectively.

**Measures**

*Job characteristics.* Measures for the five core job dimensions were obtained from Hackman and Oldham (1980) based on the Job Diagnostic Survey (JDS) (Hackman and Oldham, 1975, 1976). The JDS measures the amount of task variety, identity, significance, autonomy, and feedback from the job. Three items on the questionnaire tap each characteristic. Items were averaged to obtain the score for each characteristic. The measure was assessed on a five-point scale (ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree.)

*Job satisfaction.* This measure was estimated by 4-items scale employed by Curriivan (2000). Sample items are: “I find enjoyment in my job” and “Most days I am enthusiastic about my job” the measure was assessed on a five-point scale (ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree.)

*Turnover intentions.* This measure was drawn from the measure examined by Mobley et al. (1978) and widely used in the literature (Michaels and Spector, 1982; Miller et al., 1979). It assesses turnover intentions of an employee from his/her organization and consists of three items (i.e. I think a lot about leaving the organization). This measure was assessed on a 5-point scale from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree.

*Organizational commitment.* This measure was estimated by 4-items scale employed by Curriivan (2000). Sample items are: “I am proud to tell others I part of the organization in which I work” and “I really care about the fate of the organization in which I work” the measure was assessed on a 5-point scale (ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree).

*Organizational distributive justice.* Measured by 5-items developed by Niehoff and Moorman (1993). Sample items are: “I feel that my job responsibilities are fair” and
Table II. Means, standard deviation, and correlations among study variables

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<td>0.50**</td>
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Notes: * Significant at $p < 0.05$; ** Significant at $p < 0.01$
“I think that my level of pay is fair” the measure was assessed on a five-point scale (ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree).

**Demographic variables.** The study used the following demographic variables as control variables:

- Respondents’ gender.
- Respondents’ age.
- Tenure in the organization. Measured by the number of years the respondent is employed in the current organization.
- Gross income. (1 = less than 5,000 AED, United Arab Emirates Dirham; 2 = 5,001 to 10,000 AED; 3 = 10,001-15,000 AED; 4 = 15,001 to 20,000 AED; and 5 = more than 20,000 AED).

**Methods of analysis**

To assess the linear relationship between job characteristics and work outcomes, a series of separate hierarchical regression analyses was performed. Each model had two steps. The first step involved entering the control variables and the second step involved entering the independent variable (job characteristics).

To test the mediating role of distributive justice, the recommendations of Baron and Kenny (1986) were followed. According to them, three conditions must hold to establish a significant mediation effect:

1. The predictor (independent variable) must significantly impact the mediator.
2. The predictor must impact the criterion (dependent variable).
3. The mediator must impact the criterion variable and the impact of predictor on criterion must either become insignificant (total mediation) or become less significant (partial mediation) in the third equation when the criterion is regressed on both independent and mediator variable in the third condition.

**Results**

**Measurements characteristics**

In the present study, the measurement instrument used items from previously validated scales. When analyzed using a principal component factor analysis procedure, each scale evidenced consistent unidimensional properties, including a clear break after the first eigenvalue, explained variance due to the first factor of 58.77 percent (Autonomy) to 85.56 percent (job satisfaction) of the total variance, and large significant loading on the first factor (>0.74) (see Table III). Also, Table III shows that the reliabilities for all study variables exceed 0.70.

The five job characteristics are correlated positively. This suggests that job characteristics are distinct aspect of employees’ work environment and evidence a high level of systematic variance and discriminant validity. In addition, these characteristics have significant relationships with the three job outcomes and in a direction consistent with previous theory and research. Job characteristics have a positive relationship with job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and a negative correlation with turnover intentions (all significant at $P < 0.01$) (see Table II). Overall these significant relationships indicate the nomological validity of the job characteristics dimensions.
Finally, the intercorrelations among the job outcomes are also consistent with theoretical expectations (see Table II). Turnover intention is correlated negatively to job satisfaction and commitment (all significant at $P < 0.01$). Also, job satisfaction is correlated positively to organizational commitment (significant at $P < 0.01$). This suggests that various measures of job outcomes evidence nomological validity.

**Test of hypotheses**

The correlation analysis results as shown in Table II show that skill variety, task identity, and task significance all have a significant positive relationship with job satisfaction and organizational commitment ($P < 0.01$) and a significant negative relationship with turnover intentions. Feedback was found to have a significant positive relationship with job satisfaction and commitment ($P < 0.01$) and a significant negative relationship with turnover intentions. Also, autonomy was found to have a positive relationship with job satisfaction, commitment ($P < 0.01$) and a significant

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Factor loading</th>
<th>Eigenvalue</th>
<th>Percentage of variance</th>
<th>Cronbach</th>
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<td>1.91</td>
<td>63.82</td>
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<tr>
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<td>58.74</td>
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<td></td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>Feedback</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Job satisfaction</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>0.91</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.90</td>
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<td>Organizational commitment</td>
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<td>82.64</td>
<td>0.79</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>0.91</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Turnover intentions</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>2.53</td>
<td>84.28</td>
<td>0.91</td>
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<tr>
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<td>0.92</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.90</td>
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</tr>
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</table>
negative relationship with turnover intentions. These results are consistent with the extent literature and support the study hypotheses.

In terms of linear effects, hierarchical regression analysis indicated that job characteristics successfully predicted job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and turnover intentions. Job characteristics explained an average of 17 percent, 45 percent, and 9 percent of the variance in work outcomes respectively, above and beyond the control variables (see Table IV). Task significance, task identity, and skill variety had significant functional influence on job satisfaction (β(0.24, P < 0.01; β(0.20, P < 0.05; and β(0.18, P < 0.05). Also, feedback, skill variety, and task significance appeared to enhance organizational commitment significantly (β(0.35, P < 0.001; β(0.23, P < 0.001; and β(0.19, P < 0.01). In contrast, skill variety (β(−0.27, P < 0.001) and feedback (β(−0.22, P < 0.01) have significant functional effects by reducing turnover intentions. Surprisingly, autonomy had significant functional influence on turnover intentions (β(0.21, P < 0.001). Hence, the study H1, H2, and H3 testing the linear relationship between job characteristics and work outcomes were partially supported.

The role of distributive justice as a mediator variable in the job characteristics-work outcomes relationship was tested using a statistical procedure suggested by Baron and Kenny (1986) based on the procedure, in order to establish the mediating role of distributive justice, one needs to first show job characteristics have significant effect on distributive justice as well as on the three work outcomes in four separate hierarchical regression models. Job characteristics which were not significantly related to work outcomes were eliminated from testing the mediating role of distributive justice (see Table V).

Second, when a regression model of work outcomes on job characteristics and distributive justice is analyzed, distributive justice must still have a significant effect on work outcomes by reducing turnover intentions (β(0.21, P < 0.001). Hence, the study H1, H2, and H3 testing the linear relationship between job characteristics and work outcomes were partially supported.

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on work outcomes and the effect of job characteristics on work outcomes must be insignificant or must become less significant in step 2. Table V shows that distributive justice still has functional significant effects on both job satisfaction and turnover intentions.

It can be seen from Table V that distributive justice fully mediates the relationship between skill variety and job satisfaction, and between task identity and turnover intentions as the main effects of both skill variety and task identity become insignificant after distributive justice is introduced in the equation. Moreover, distributive justice partially mediates the relationship between task identity and significance, and job satisfaction, and between skill variety and turnover intentions as their effects become less significant after distributive justice is introduced in the equation. The reported $\Delta R^2$ and $F$ for $\Delta R^2$ as shown in Table V support the previously mentioned results. Hence, $H4$ and $H6$ are partially supported.

In contrast, distributive justice did not mediate the relationship between job characteristics and organizational commitment as job characteristics effects become more significant after distributive justice is introduced in the equation. Hence, $H5$ is not supported.

### Table V.
Hierarchical regression results for testing mediation: distributive justice as mediator of job characteristics-work outcomes relationship ($n = 350$)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictors</th>
<th>Distributive justice</th>
<th>Job satisfaction</th>
<th>Organizational commitment</th>
<th>Turnover intention</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Step 1</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>-0.04</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>0.11*</td>
<td>0.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>-0.11</td>
<td>-0.05</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenure in the organization</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>-0.08</td>
<td>0.11*</td>
<td>0.14*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salary</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>-0.11</td>
<td>-0.05</td>
<td>0.17**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted $R^2$</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Step 2</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skill variety</td>
<td>0.55***</td>
<td>0.20**</td>
<td>0.23**</td>
<td>-0.47***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task identity</td>
<td>0.22**</td>
<td>0.24**</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>-0.19*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task significance</td>
<td>0.15*</td>
<td>0.18*</td>
<td>0.18**</td>
<td>0.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autonomy</td>
<td>0.27***</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.13</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feedback</td>
<td>0.23**</td>
<td>-0.06</td>
<td>0.35***</td>
<td>-0.07</td>
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<tr>
<td>Adjusted $R^2$</td>
<td>0.39</td>
<td>0.58</td>
<td>0.39</td>
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<tr>
<td>$\Delta R^2$</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td>0.46</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$F$ for $\Delta R^2$ (Steps 1 and 2)</td>
<td>20.80***</td>
<td>48.35***</td>
<td>19.99***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Step 3</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Skill variety $\times$ distributive justice</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>0.25**</td>
<td>-0.33**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task identity $\times$ distributive justice</td>
<td>0.18*</td>
<td>0.21**</td>
<td>-0.13</td>
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<tr>
<td>Task significance $\times$ distributive justice</td>
<td>0.21**</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Autonomy $\times$ distributive justice</td>
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<td>Feedback $\times$ distributive justice</td>
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<tr>
<td>Distributive justice</td>
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<tr>
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<td>0.0</td>
<td>49.25***</td>
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</table>

**Notes:** * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$
Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine the extent to which job characteristics augments positive work attitudes and behaviors of employees in a non-Western context of the UAE. The study also investigated whether distributive justice mediates the job characteristics-work outcomes relationships. The study advances the literature pertaining to job characteristics model by empirically demonstrating the importance of job characteristics for developing positive work outcomes in a non-Western context.

The study reaffirms the view of that job characteristics have functional effects on work outcomes. The study found that to increase the employee satisfaction and commitment and decrease turnover intentions in a non-Western context, organizations needs to increase the provision of job characteristics. The estimated coefficients provide further insights into these effects.

Skill variety and task significance have consistent functional effects on job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and turnover intentions, in support of JCM predictions of that skill variety and task significance hold motivational potential through experienced meaningfulness of work. These results are also consistent with the results reported by Singh (1998) who argued that provision of task variety through rotating employees helps them deal with perceived role conflict. Therefore, high task variety helps to reduce dysfunctional influence of role conflict on job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and turnover intentions.

Moreover, the study shows that in a non-Western context feedback has functional impact on work outcomes and this support the view of that feedback serves to enhance work outcomes through its instrumental function (knowledge of results). This connection also exists because feedback facilitates coping with high levels of role stressors by getting information that aids in dealing with stress-inducing situations (Singh, 1998). For employees facing role conflict, feedback helps by reducing the negative effects of conflict on job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and turnover intentions (Singh, 1998).

The significant relationships reported between skill variety and the three job outcomes, and between feedback and organizational commitment and turnover intentions were consistent with the previous studies conducted in a Western context (e.g., Brown and Peterson, 1993; Evans et al., 2002; Fried and Ferris, 1987; Hackman and Oldham, 1980; Keller and Holland, 1981; Morrison et al., 2005; Mowday et al., 1979, Singh, 1998; Stone and Porter, 1975; O’Brien, 1982; O’Reilly et al., 1980; Snyder et al., 1982; Stone, 1986; Stone and Porter, 1975; Teas, 1981; Thomas et al., 2004).

Contrary to many Western context studies (e.g., Dodd and Ganster, 1996; Keller and Holland, 1981; Snyder et al., 1982; Stone, 1986) reported that task significance and identity have seldom emerged as strong predictors of outcomes, the study showed significant relationships between task significance and the three job outcomes and between task identity and job satisfaction. One possible explanation of this might be that in the UAE culture the more the internal and external significance of the job is, the more likely to be perceived as a symbol of high status.

Also and contrary to previous Western context studies (e.g., Keller and Holland, 1981; Mowday et al., 1979; O’Brien, 1982; O’Reilly et al., 1980; Snyder et al., 1982; Stone, 1986; Stone and Porter, 1975; Teas, 1981) suggested that that autonomy has emerged as the most robust correlates of work outcomes, the present study showed that autonomy was not a valid predictor of variation in job satisfaction and organizational
commitment. Also, autonomy was found to be positively related to turnover intentions. One possible explanation for this result is that UAE culture is high in uncertainty avoidance (preferring strict rules and regulations and resistance to change and risk), therefore, for UAE people, increasing autonomy is perceived as lack of direction.

Additionally, the finding that distributive justice mediates some of the relationships between job characteristics and work outcomes is noteworthy. Practitioners and academics alike have given increased attention to job characteristics and the many positive work outcomes that are associated with certain job characteristics. The study shows that employees whose their jobs are high in certain characteristics (i.e. skill variety, task identity, task significance, and feedback) are more likely to perceive distributive justice, which in turn lead to better work outcomes (i.e. job satisfaction and turnover intentions). These results were consistent with the results reported by Suliman (2007) who stressed the significant role that justice plays in influencing employees’ behavior and work outcomes in the Middle East in general and in the UAE in particular. He argued that managers in the Middle East should assess organizational justice in order to improve employees’ satisfaction and performance.

Several limitations of this research must be recognized in a balanced discussion of its findings. First, because self-report method was used, it is possible that the explained variances are increased because of common method variance. Second, common variance problems cannot be ruled out since data on both independent and dependent variables were collected at the same time and using the same questionnaire. This potential bias could be prevented by the use of longitudinal approaches. Third, the impact of cultural dimensions was not controlled in this study, and may have influenced job characteristics-work outcomes relationship.

Nevertheless, the results provide new insights on the influence of job characteristics on work outcomes in a non-Western context of the UAE. The study also determined the most important job characteristics affecting each of the work outcomes after controlling the impact of some demographic variables and distributive justice. Finally, the study provided an evidence for the mediating role of distributive justice on some of the job characteristics-work outcomes relationships.

There are several areas for possible future research. First, future replications and extensions are necessary to circumscribe the generalizability and applicability of findings reported here. Second, future researches need to consider the impact of some potential moderators (e.g., personality, other contextual factors) on the relationship between job characteristics and work outcomes. Finally, future researches could measure the impact of culturally sensitive on job characteristics-work outcomes relationship.

Research implications
The current study demonstrates that in a non-Western context the characteristics of a job are important determinants of positive work outcomes. Researchers and practitioners interested in creating or redesigning jobs to lead to more job satisfaction, more organizational commitment and low turnover intentions in the UAE should concentrate on implementing certain characteristics of the job such as skill variety, task significance and feedback in order to motivate their employees. For improving job satisfaction, managers should concentrate on the characteristics of skill variety, task identity, and task significance. For improving organizational
commitment, managers should concentrate on the characteristics of feedback, skill variety, and task significance. Furthermore, concentrating on skill variety, task significance, and feedback, would decrease turnover intentions. Finally, managers in UAE should train their employees on how they can accept and use autonomy at work. Greater autonomy helps reduce role stress and increase work outcomes.

The study also provides evidence that should be of interest to organizational decision-makers with regard to what they may do in order to enhance distributive justice experienced by employees. Specifically, if managers can focus on and improve job characteristics that are associated with distributive justice, overall justice may likewise be improved. Thus, managers may increase skill variety, task identity, and task significance in order to enhance distributive justice, which in turn lead to high job satisfaction and low turnover intentions.

References


Further reading

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