

# **Examining the Mediating Role of the Critical Psychological States between Job Characteristics and Job Satisfaction among Employees in the General Media Sector in Syria**

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## **Abstract**

This study examines the Relationship between Job characteristics and job satisfaction among employee in the general media sector. Job characteristics (i.e., Task variety, Task identity, Task significance, autonomy, and feedback) were tested as predictors of job satisfaction by using three critical psychological states as mediator variables. Data were collected from 103 employees working in many different sections by using JDS survey. Consistent with studies conducted in this domain SPSS was the basic tool especially hierarchical regression analyses. The study revealed that all job characteristics dimension was positively related to job satisfaction, and three CPS. And for mediation role we found all three CPS variable play this role but with different rates.

**Keywords:** Job Characteristics, Critical Psychological States, Job Satisfaction

## **Introduction**

Many studies have tried to find any additional variables which can explain the changes in the levels of the job satisfaction between employees especially that variables based on their perceptions which we can called subjective variables or personal variables.

Researchers in business and industry have long been interested in the relationship between the design of a job and the way in which the workers respond in terms of satisfaction, motivation, and productivity. They have also been interested in the action of intervening or moderating variables that might affect this relationship. During the past 20 years several models have been proposed to explain this relationship and the action of moderating variables. The Job Characteristics Model developed by Hackman and Oldham (1976) appears to be one of the most comprehensive models. The Job Diagnostic Survey (JDS) the instrument developed by Hackman and Oldham (1975, 1980) to provide measures of the critical variables in their model has been used in a variety of studies.

### **Problem of the Study:**

The problem of this study was based on the fact that there was a lack of knowledge about the relationship between employee's job characteristics perception and general job satisfaction after used CPS as a mediator variable.

### **Research Objectives**

Based on the problem of the study, the main objectives of this paper were listed as follows:

- To identify the role of Experienced Meaningfulness as a mediator variable between (*Skill variety, Task identity, and Task significance*) and general job satisfaction.
- To identify the role of Experienced Responsibility as a mediator variable between (*Autonomy*) and general job satisfaction.
- To identify the role of Knowledge of results as a mediator variable between (*Feedbacks from the job*) and general job satisfaction.

### **Research Questions**

- a) How do employees feel about their core job characteristics of skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback?
- b) How do employees feel about their critical psychological states of experienced meaningfulness, experienced responsibility, and knowledge of results?
- c) To what extent the three variables of CPS play a mediator role in the relationship between job dimension and general job satisfaction?

### **Importance of Study**

The problem of this study was based on the trying to find the basic participation of the critical psychological state on reinforcement general job satisfaction between employees.

### **Literature Review**

Hackman and Oldham's (1976) job characteristics model has stimulated over 200 published empirical studies and at least three comprehensive reviews (e.g., Fried & Ferris, 1987; Loher, Noe, Moeller & Fitzgerald, 1985; Roberts & Glick, 1981).

In their review, (Fried and Ferris, 1987) found that only eight studies included the critical psychologic states (CPS), and only three of those eight studies examined the CPS mediation hypothesis (Arnold & House, 1980; Hackman & Oldham, 1976; Wall, Clegg & Jackson, 1978).

Hackman and Oldham (1975, 1976, 1980) consider the critical psychological states as the central point of the model. (Orpen, 1979) acknowledged the presence of the psychological states as a result of the simultaneous presence of the five core job characteristics. Hackman and Oldham stated the psychological states are internal to workers and cannot be manipulated in designing or managing work. Perhaps those who ignore the psychological states assumed that if the five core job characteristics are present then the three psychological states are also present. Hackman and Oldham (1976) found that relationships between the core characteristics and the personal and work outcomes were stronger when mediated by the critical psychological states. This discovery adds strength to the argument that the psychological states be included in the model.

Research done by Hackman and Oldham (1975, 1976) supported the relationships predicted by their model between the core job characteristics and the critical psychological states after used correlation and multiple regression analyses techniques.

Other researchers supporting the predictions of the model include:

- Arnold and House (1980), Hackman and Oldham (1976), Kiggundu (1980, 1983), Tyagi (1985). Arnold and House (1980), and Kiggundu (1980) noted a strong correlation occurred between the task characteristics "skill variety", "task identity" , "task significance" and "autonomy" and the psychological state of "knowledge of actual results of work activities" which was not predicted by the model. The psychological state "experienced responsibilities for outcomes of work" was also affected by all five core characteristics but not always significantly even for its predicted relationship (Arnold & House, 1980; Kiggundu, 1980).
- Arnold and House (1980) and Kiggundu (1980,1983) also found a positive relationship between autonomy and "experienced meaningfulness of work" which was not predicted by the model.
- Only Arnold and House (1980) demonstrated an unpredicted significant relationship between "feedback from the job" and "experienced responsibility for the outcomes of the work".

The supporting research demonstrated positive statistically significant relationships between the core job characteristics and the critical psychological states; however, the relationships did not appear to be as discriminating as the model states. This variation from the model may be tolerated as the model stipulates that the psychological states must all be present in order to achieve the desired outcomes and certainly their relationship to the core job characteristics has been adequately demonstrated through research findings.

A positive relationship between the "motivating potential score" and each of the three psychological states has been demonstrated (Bhagat & Chassie, 1980; Kiggundu, 1980).

### Job Dimensions

The JDS provides measures of the five core dimensions shown in Figure 1, which are defined As follows:

- **Skill variety:** 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.
- **Task identity:** The degree to which the job requires completion of a "whole" and identifiable piece of work—that is, doing a job from beginning to end with a visible outcome.
- **Task significance:** 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.
- **Autonomy:** 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.
- **Feedback from the job itself:** The degree to which carrying out the work activities required by the job results in the employee obtaining direct and clear information about the effectiveness of his or her performance. In addition, measures are obtained for two supplementary dimensions which have been found to be helpful in understanding jobs and employee reactions to them. These are:
  - **Feedback from agents.** The degree to which the employee receives clear information about his or her performance from supervisors or from co-workers. (This dimension is

not, strictly speaking, a characteristic of the job itself. It is included to provide information to supplement that provided by the "feedback from the job itself" dimension.)

- **Dealing with others.** The degree to which the job requires the employee to work closely with other people in carrying out the work activities (including dealings with other organization members and with external organizational "clients.")

### **Critical Psychological States**

The JDS provides measures of each of the three psychological states shown in Figure 1 as mediating between the core job dimensions and the outcomes of the work. These are:

- *Experienced meaningfulness of the work.* The degree to which the employee experiences the job as one which is generally meaningful, valuable, and worthwhile.
- *Experienced responsibility for work outcomes.* The degree to which the employee feels personally accountable and responsible for the results of the work he or she does.
- *Knowledge of results.* The degree to which the employee knows and understands, on a continuous basis, how effectively he or she is performing the job.

Scores for the critical psychological states are obtained from both self-descriptive and projective type items. In the self-descriptive section, respondents indicate their level of agreement with a number of statements about their work experiences.

### **General Job Satisfaction**

General job satisfaction is an overall measure of the degree to which employees are satisfied and happy with the job. Growth satisfaction indicates job holders have enriched opportunities for personal learning and growth at work and find these personally satisfying (Hackman & Oldham, 1975).

"High job satisfaction has been well supported as an outcome although most researchers did not differentiate between general satisfaction and growth satisfaction (Arnold & House, 1980; Frank & Hackman, 1975; Hackman & Oldham, 1976; Orpen, 1979).

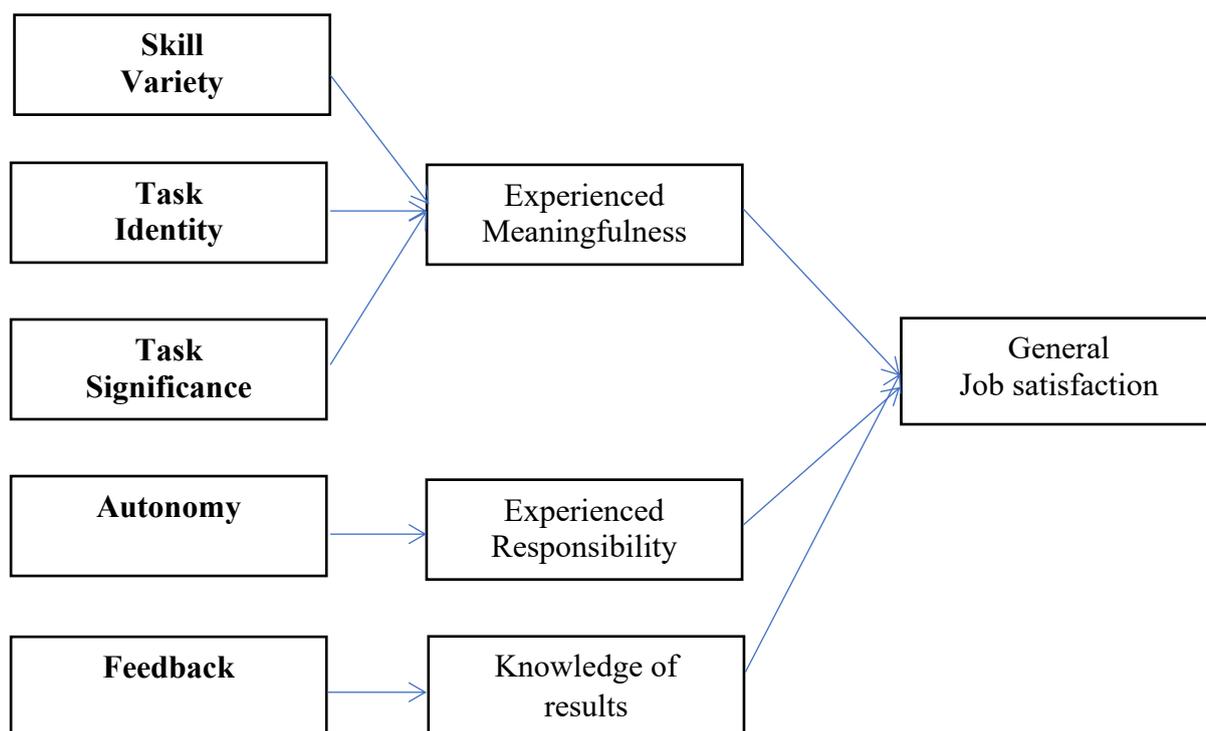
**Model:**

Figure (1) The job characteristics model of work motivation.

Source: Hackman, J. R., & Oldham, G. (1975) Development of the job diagnostic survey. *Journal of Applied Psychology*

**Hypothesis**

Hypothesis 1: The experienced meaningfulness will mediate the relations between the core job dimensions (Skill Variety, Task Identity, and Task Significance) and General Job satisfaction.

Hypothesis 2: The experienced responsibility will mediate the relations between the core job dimension (Autonomy) and General Job satisfaction.

Hypothesis 3: The knowledge of results will mediate the relations between the core job dimensions (Feedback) and General Job satisfaction.

**Methodology****Instruments**

**Job diagnostic survey (JDS)** Hackman and Oldham (1976) developed a self-report instrument to measure the five core job features of job characteristics model. The questionnaire consists of 18 items, and items were scored on 5 point Likert type scale.

**Sample**

The research sample comprised of employee working in general media sector located in Damascus in Syria.

Respondents were asked to respond to self-administered questionnaire comprising of four sections job characteristics, critical psychological states, job satisfaction, and socio-demographic details

Table 1:  
socio-demographic details

Demographics	N	%
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	39	47
Female	64	62
<b>Age</b>		
25 and below	23	22.2
21-30	45	43.1
31-40	18	18.2
Above 40	17	16.5
<b>Education</b>		
High school	40	38.5
Institute	46	44.9
University	17	19.6

The majority Of the respondents ( 62%) were female with an average age of forty-one years. Although most of the employee ( 64%) held at least a Institute degree, The largest portion of the sample was young and only (19%) had earned university education degree.

### **Test of hypotheses**

The hypotheses were tested by using the multiple regression analysis from SPSS software program and the results are showed in table 2

Table: 2

	mean	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Skill Variety	3.22	(77%)	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
Task Identity	3.25	0.35*	(79%)	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
Task Significance	3.5	0.37*	0.33*	(82%)	---	---	---	---	---	---
Autonomy	2.89	0.38*	0.29*	0.39*	(68%)	---	---	---	---	---
Feedback	3.11	0.38*	0.37*	0.52*	0.22*	(67%)	---	---	---	---
Experienced Meaningfulness	3.89	0.39*	0.35*	0.38*	0.41*	0.28*	(75%)	---	---	---
Experienced Responsibility	3.15	0.43*	0.38*	0.29*	0.39*	0.33*	0.27*	(79%)	---	---
Knowledge of results	3.22	0.36*	0.29*	0.28*	0.25*	0.25*	0.45*	0.44*	(71%)	---

General Job satisfaction	3.25	0.23*	0.25*	0.33*	0.28*	0.38*	0.32*	0.31*	0.33*	(84 %)
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Note. \*p <05, \*\*p<01

Table -2- shows the means and correlations among the variables along with internal consistencies (Cronbach's alpha) for those variables with multiple items.

Correlation table above show that Job characteristics (Task identity Feedback Skill variety Autonym Task Significance) have significant positive relation with CPS variables and general job satisfaction

Also, CPS variables have significant positive relation with general job satisfaction.

**Mediation test**

Table -4- Regression Analysis of CPS mediating between Job characteristic and General Job satisfaction.

Hypothesis 1: The experienced meaningfulness will mediate the relations between the core job dimensions (Skill Variety, Task Identity, and Task Significance) and General Job satisfaction.

Table: 3

	General job satisfaction			
	R <sup>2</sup>	R <sup>2</sup> with mediator	R <sup>2</sup> change	result
Skill variety	0.23	0.29	0.06	mediation
Autonomy	0.25	0.28	0.03	mediation
Task identity	0.33	0.34	0.01	Partial mediation

The R Square value for (Skill variety, Autonomy, Task identity) are (0.23, 0.25, 0.33) respectively, which shows the variance between Job characteristic and General Job satisfaction, and based on table the value indicates that (0.23%, 0.25%, 0.33%) variance in General job satisfaction can be predicted from the variables of Job characteristic respectively. As shown in the 2<sup>ed</sup> step Experienced Meaningfulness of work was taken as mediator between Job characteristic and General Job satisfaction.

R<sup>2</sup> value increased which suggest that Experienced Meaningfulness of Work successfully mediate the relationship between Job characteristic and General Job satisfaction.

Hypothesis 2: The experienced responsibility will mediate the relations between the core job dimension (Autonomy) and General Job satisfaction.

Table: 4

	General job satisfaction			
	R <sup>2</sup>	R <sup>2</sup> with mediator	R <sup>2</sup> change	result
Autonomy	0.28	0.29	0.01	Partial mediation

The R Square value for (Autonomy) is (0.28), which shows the variance between Job characteristic and General Job satisfaction, the value indicates that (0.28%) variance in General job satisfaction can be predicted from the variables of Job characteristic from the table.

And as shown in the second step Experienced Responsibility for the Work was taken as mediator between Job characteristic and General Job satisfaction. R<sup>2</sup> value increased which suggest that Experienced Responsibility for the Work mediate between Job characteristic and General Job satisfaction partially.

Hypothesis 3: The knowledge of results will mediate the relations between the core job dimensions (Feedback) and General Job satisfaction.

Table: 5

	General job satisfaction			
	R <sup>2</sup>	R <sup>2</sup> with mediator	R <sup>2</sup> change	result
Feedback	0.38	0.39	0.01	Partial mediation

The R Square value for (Feedback) is (0.38), which shows the variance between feedback and General Job satisfaction, the value indicates that (0.38%) variance in General job satisfaction can be predicted from the variables of feedback.

And as shown in the 2<sup>ed</sup> step when Knowledge of the Results was taken as mediator between feedback and General job satisfaction. R<sup>2</sup> value increased which suggest that Knowledge of the Results successfully mediate between feedback and General job satisfaction Partially.

### Discussion of Findings

From the analysis table (1) it was discovered that the Core Job Characteristics are significantly present as CPS variables based on the mean for every one of them.

The validation of hypothesis one revealed that the Experienced Meaningfulness of work mediate the relationship between Core Job Characteristics (Skill variety, Autonomy, Task identity) and general job satisfaction, which consonance with many other studies like Hackman and Oldham (1976), Bhagat & Chassie, (1980).

For second hypothesis we can notice that Experienced Responsibility for the Work increased the level of the R<sup>2</sup> not as it must be to say it is a mediator variable, so Experienced Responsibility for the Work mediate the relationship but in partially way.

The last hypothesis also accepted partially because the third variable of CPS Knowledge of the Results mediate the relationship between Feedback and general job satisfaction

Based on previous we can say the three psychological states do significantly predict and influence employee general job satisfaction and This discovery is in line with the opinion

of many other past researches like Hackman and Oldham (1976), Bhagat & Chassie, 1980; Kiggundu, 1980)

And similar to this is the discovery made by Fried and Ferris (1987). They found out that the relationship between the core characteristics and work outcomes were stronger when mediated by the critical psychological state.

Mayo (1946), who posits that psychological and sociological factors were paramount in understanding workers' effectiveness, behaviour, and satisfaction and concluded that management's show of concern about workers could motivate them to better performance.

### ***Limitations and Future Research***

There are several limitations of this study that can be addressed in future research.

- **First**, the demographics of this study limit the external reliability of the findings specifically due to the uniqueness of the media sector in Syria.
- **Second**, individual differences in employee in the media sector may have different.
- **Third**, job satisfaction must necessarily be studied with many other variables like job stress, cultural elements apart from job characteristics
- **Finally**: differences in how members in groups respond to their jobs might be explained in terms of employees' personal need for professional growth and development rather than cultural background differences.

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