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A Study On Task Characteristics Of Lakhsmi Seva Sangham (Lss), Gandhigram

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Abstract

Job characteristics theory is a theory of work design which provides a set of implementing principles for enriching jobs in organizational setting. Tasks characteristics of a job consist of five “core” job characteristics such as; skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy and feedback that affect five work related outcomes namely, motivation, satisfaction, performance, and absenteeism and turnover through three psychological states that is, experienced meaningfulness, experienced responsibility, and knowledge of results. This research papers explores the task characteristics of job in the study area in terms of skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy and feedback. The study concludes that tasks characteristics in Lakshmi Seva Sangham (LSS) were satisfactory and need to give more decision-making autonomy and work scheduling autonomy for further development so that they can give optimum outcomes to the unit.

Keywords: *Tasks characteristic of job: skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy and feedback.*

Introduction

Job characteristics theory is a theory of work design which provides a set of implementing principles for enriching jobs in organizational setting. Tasks characteristics of a job consist of five “core” job characteristics such as; skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy and feedback that affect five work related outcomes namely, motivation, satisfaction, performance, and absenteeism and turnover through three psychological states that is, experienced meaningfulness, experienced responsibility, and knowledge of results. Skill variety is the degree to which a job requires various activities, requiring the worker to develop a variety of skills and talents. Jobholders can experience more meaningfulness in jobs that require several different skills and abilities than when the jobs are elementary and routine. Task identity is the degree to which the job requires the jobholders to identify and complete a work piece with a visible outcome. Workers experience more meaningfulness in a job when they are involved in the entire process rather than just being responsible for a part of the work. Task significance is the degree to which the job impacts other people’s lives. The influence can be either in the immediate organization or in the external environment. Employees feel more meaningfulness in a job that substantially improves either psychological or physical well-being of others than a job

that has limited impact on anyone else. Autonomy is the degree to which the job provides the employee with significant freedom, independence, and discretion to plan out the work and determine the procedures in the job. For jobs with a high level of autonomy, the outcomes of the work depend on the workers' own efforts, initiatives, and decisions; rather than on the instructions from a manager or a manual of job procedures. In such cases, the jobholders experience greater personal responsibility for their own successes and failures at work. Feedback is the degree to which the worker is provided with clear, specific, detailed, actionable information about the effectiveness of his or her job performance. When workers receive clear, actionable information about their work performance, they have better overall knowledge of the impact of their work activities, and what specific actions they need to take to improve their productivity.

Objectives of the Study

The broad objective of the present research work was to study the task characteristics of job of the Lakshmi Seva Sangham, Gandhigram and the specific objectives are to study the skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy and feedback that affect five work related outcomes namely, motivation, satisfaction, performance, and absenteeism and turnover through three psychological states, that is, experienced meaningfulness, experienced responsibility, and knowledge of results.

Study area

The vision of the founder of Gandhigram Late Dr.T.S. Soundaram to create rural employment and hard work of Padmashree V.Padmanabhan and Sri.V.Krishnamuthy along with the expert guidance of Dr.Kondal Rao (founder of IMPCOPS,Chennai) to make quality and affordable Indian medicines, formed the genesis of the Lakshmi Seva Sangham (LSS),Gandhigram, in 1977. Initially started with about 17 preparations, the Siddha and Ayurvedic drug manufacturing unit today produces 240 preparations with herbs and medicines collected by traditional herb collectors, the processing done under hygienic condition with strict quality control systems monitored by doctors and technicians. The unit provides employments directly 150 women and 50 men in the processing, packaging and marketing of the medicines, particularly to the destitute, widows and handicapped. So a research has been carried out about how the unit was maintaining their work design.

Methodology adopted

Exploratory method has been adopted to study the work design of LSS. The study is confined to the work design of the LSS whereby secondary was collected from the registers and annually audited statements maintained by the unit. Also using a pre-tested interview schedule the researcher collected information directly from the 150 men employees and 50 women employees of the study unit. The present study employed tools like percentage, mean, and standard deviation for data analysis.

Major Findings

Percentage Analysis

- ☞ Absolute majority (57.13%) of the managers was men and half of the computer and mathematical employees were men in the study unit.
- ☞ Minority of the employees in the sales and related department, production assistants department and office and administration support were men.
- ☞ Absolute majority of the incumbent population of the study unit was Production Assistants employees (70 %) and the minority was the Computer and Mathematical employees (1.66%)
- ☞ A vast majority of the employees (77.5%) in the study area did not have work scheduling autonomy in their job and 5.85% of the employees had little autonomy in work scheduling.
- ☞ Absolute majority of the employees (61.67%) in the study area did not have decision-making autonomy in their job and 16.67% of the employees were absolutely not having decision-making autonomy in their job. However, 5.83% of the employees were having absolute decision-making autonomy and 7.5% of the employees had decision-making autonomy in some areas.
- ☞ Less than half of the employees (41.66%) had absolute work-methods autonomy and on the other hand, 24.17% of the employees were absolutely not having work-methods autonomy in their job.
- ☞ There was no concrete opinion about task variety of their job since 33.33% of the respondents stated that their job does not involve variety of task, and 22.5 % of the respondents stated that their involved great deal of task variety.

- ☞ 33.33 % of the employees stated that their job result affect very much to the organization and 9.16 % of the employees stated that their job result had less or no direct impact to the organization.
- ☞ The study revealed that 20.83 % of the employees were allowed to complete the work by themselves the work which they had started and 29.16 % revealed that the job which they performed was started by others and completed by others too.
- ☞ On the opinion about feedback from the Job they performed 41.66% of the employees agreed that their job performance information was very clear but 25% of the employees stated that their job performance was not recognizable.

Mean Score of Tasks Characteristics

The mean score for the tasks characteristics was found that:

- ☞ Work methods autonomy in the work place, task significances and feedback from the job with mean score 3.4250, 3.7167 and 3.3333 respectively concentrated around the score of average and good and,
- ☞ Work scheduling autonomy in the work place, decision-making autonomy in the work place, variety of task and identity of tasks with mean score 2.2833, 2.2417, 2.7833 and 2.9583 respectively concentrated below average and bad.

Standard Deviation of Contextual Characteristics

The standard deviation that measures how concentrated the data are around the mean; the more concentrated, the smaller the standard deviation and a large standard deviation means that the values in the data set are farther away from the mean, on average, the present study reveals that;

- ☼ The calculated Standard Deviation (SD) value lies between .56781 and 1.70680 concentrating to the Mean Score between 2.2417 and 3.7167 for the 7 tasks characteristics that was considered for the present study as presented in table 2.

Ranking of Tasks Characteristics in Terms its Provision Availability

The study found that;

- ☞ Significance of tasks that they performed was ranked 1st among the 7 tasks characteristics that was considered for the present study, 2nd rank was given to works method autonomy

in their job and feedback that they received from their performed activities was ranked 3rd.

- ✚ Tasks characteristics such as identity of tasks and variety of tasks of their job were ranked in the middle place among the 7 contextual characteristics that was considered for the present study.
- ✚ Decision-making autonomy and work scheduling autonomy at the work place was placed last among the contextual characteristics in the study area.

Conclusion and suggestions

The study concludes that tasks characteristics in Lakshmi Seva Sangham (LSS) were satisfactory and employees were performing their job activity at the worksite with environment where they can give optimum outcomes to the unit. However, it is suggested that the study unit requires looking into the area for further improvement such as, giving more decision-making autonomy and work scheduling autonomy for further development as the employees were not very satisfactory that was found from the present research work.

Table 1: Incumbent Population by Occupation

Sl.No.	Occupation category	Nos.	Age (years)		Job experience (years)		Sex (%men)
			Mean	SD*	Mean	SD*	
1	Management	07	48.71	5.22	8.57	1.9	57.13
2	Computer and mathematical	02	37.5	2.5	7.5	2.5	50
3	Sales and related	10	42.1	4.3	13.8	6.41	20
4	Protective services	05	46.6	7.83	17	9.27	100
5	Office and administration support	09	37.37	3.99	8.55	5.94	44.44
6	Transportation and material moving	03	40	7.78	7.33	2.05	100
7	Production assistants	84	42.57	5.44	12.9	6.08	28.6
Total		120					

Sources: Primary data

*Note: * Standard Deviation*

Table 2: Tasks Characteristics

Variables in Task Characteristics	Agreement Level/Statement				
	Score 5	Score 4	Score 3	Score 2	Score 1
Work Scheduling	Yes, definitely	Yes	Neutral, yes and no	No	No, definitely not
Autonomy in the work place	Yes, definitely	Yes	Neutral, yes and no	No	No, definitely not
No.	00 (00)	07 (5.83)	20 (16.67)	93 (77.5)	00 (00)
Mean Score	2.2833				
SD	.56781				
Rank	VI				

Decision-making Autonomy in the work place	Yes, definitely	Yes	Neutral, yes and no	No	No, definitely not	
	No.	07 (5.83)	09 (7.5)	10 (8.33)	74 (61.67)	20 (16.67)
	Mean Score	2.2417				
	SD	1.01249				
	Rank	VII				
Work Methods Autonomy in the work place	Yes, definitely	Yes	Neutral, yes and no	No	No, definitely not	
	No.	50 (41.66)	20 (16.66)	10 (8.33)	11 (9.16)	29 (24.17)
	Mean Score	3.4250				
	SD	1.65343				
	Rank	II				
Opinion about task variety	The job involved great deal of task variety	The job involved variety of task	The job involved average variety of task	The job involved very less variety of task	The job does not involve variety of task	
	No.	27 (22.5)	20 (16.66)	13 (10.83)	20 (16.66)	40 (33.33)
	Mean Score	2.7833				
	SD	1.59402				
	Rank	V				
Opinion about task Significances	The job result very much affects the organization	The job itself was significant and important	The job result was likely to affect the organization	The job results have impact outside the organization	The job results have less or no impact to the organization	
	No.	40 (33.33)	35 (29.16)	27 (22.5)	07 (5.83)	11 (9.16)
	Mean Score	3.7167				
	SD	1.24471				
	Rank	I				

Opinion about Task Identity	The job allowed them to complete the work they started	The job was started by others and they have to complete the job	The job was independent	The job was started by them and completed by others	The job was started by others and completed by others too.	
	No.	25 (20.83)	30 (25)	15 (12.5)	15 (12.5)	35 (29.16)
	Mean Score	2.9583				
	SD	1.54700				
	Rank	IV				
Opinion about feedback from the Job	Their job performance information was very clear	Their job performance information was very clear	Not ascertained	They got little information about their job performance.	Their job performance was not recognizable	
	No.	50 (41.66)	20 (16.66)	00 (00)	20 (16.66)	30 (25)
	Mean Score	3.3333				
	SD	1.70680				
	Rank	III				

Source: Primary data. Note: Figure in the parenthesis represents the percent of respondents to the total respondents

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