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Theory and Results of Organisational Factors Influencing Work Outcomes

Mediated by Motivation

Return on Investment for the Organisation

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Introduction

In the psychological jungle full of industrial and organisational theories, constructs and ideas it is important to know right from wrong and important from unimportant. With that knowledge in mind the following article came into existence. The objective of this paper is to provide a description of seventeen fundamental organisational factors, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, and ten crucial work outcomes. Moreover, this paper will show the relationship between the organisational factors and the work outcomes and the mediation effects of both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Finally, for work engagement, one of the most important work outcomes, the return on investment is stated.

Earlier studies found that employees are influenced by many factors, both positively and negatively. Moreover, for employees to reach their full potential and optimum well-being certain factors overshadow others. A clear distinction can be made between organisational factors, motivation and work outcomes. Organisational factors are the factors which form the foundation of the organisation and lie both within the organisation and within the employees. The seventeen fundamental organisational factors are autonomy, job security, reward, feedback, opportunity for growth, organisational support, promotion opportunities, psychological contract, social work relations, status, transactional leadership, transformational leadership, challenge, skill variety, self-efficacy, experienced meaningfulness and conscientiousness. Motivation, a powerful influence on human behaviour consists of two constructs: intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Finally, work outcomes are the important core components of behaviour of employees. These work outcomes are job performance, effort, commitment, work engagement, willingness to work longer, functional flexibility, well-being, responsibility, satisfaction, intention to continue working, intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation.

These constructs were not chosen at random. Earlier studies (e.g. Rickli, 2010) underlined the constructs and their significance for employees and organisation. This paper is composed by means of a thorough examination of the available literature. The findings of multiple studies are used and combined to form a critical and objective review. The review consists of an outline of the organisational factors, short explanations of motivation and the work outcomes followed by their relationships and effects.

Autonomy

The first organisational factor is autonomy and is defined as the freedom employees have to do their jobs as they see fit (Spector, 2006). Research has indicated that the greater the autonomy of employees the greater their intrinsic motivation (Robbins & Judge, 2009). Moreover, when looking at the relationship between autonomy and the work outcomes research has shown that autonomy increases satisfaction (Fried & Ferris, 1987), commitment (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990), responsibility and performance (Hackman & Oldham, 1976). Autonomy did not, however, show any relationship with extrinsic motivation.

Job security

Job security is defined as the probability that an individual will keep his or her job and income. A job with a high level of job security means that the person with the job will have a small chance of becoming unemployed (Robbins & Judge, 2009). A high job security is important to increase the extrinsic motivation of employees. Furthermore, a high job security will lead to more effort and better performance (Robbins & Judge, 2009). Job security did not, however, show any relationship with intrinsic motivation.

Reward

Reward is defined as a payment often offered as an incentive for the accomplishment of a task (Marcus & Van Dam, 2007). A higher reward will also lead to an increase in extrinsic motivation (Siegrist, 1996) which causes the employees to put in more effort and performance (Marcus & Van Dam, 2007; Robbins & Judge, 2009). Similar to job security, reward did not show any relationship with intrinsic motivation.

Feedback

Feedback is defined as the extent to which it is obvious to employees that they are doing their jobs correctly and meeting expectations (Spector, 2006). Because a job consists of many aspects (written, spoken, appearance, etc.) feedback can be provided on one or more of these aspects. Feedback is an important variable for organisations as it is a strong booster of intrinsic motivation (Robbins & Judge, 2009). Moreover, feedback increases employee satisfaction (Fried & Ferris, 1987), commitment (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990), work engagement (Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner, & Schaufeli, 2001) responsibility and performance (Hackman & Oldham, 1976). Feedback is, however, not a mechanism that influences extrinsic motivation.

Opportunity for growth

Opportunity for growth is defined as the opportunity to learn from the work that has to be done, whether the work stimulates personal growth and whether talents are fully used in the job (Spector, 2006). Interestingly, opportunity for growth increases both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Moreover, opportunity for growth decreases turnover intention (Spector, 2006) and increases work engagement (Demerouti et al., 2001), commitment (Mullins, 2007), satisfaction (Fried & Ferris, 1987), functional flexibility (Marcus & Van Dam, 2007), effort and performance (Robbins & Judge, 2009).

 Organisational support

Organisational support is the degree to which employees believe that their organisation values their contribution and cares about their well-being (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). Research has shown that a higher organisational support will lead to a higher extrinsic motivation of the employees (Robbins & Judge, 2009). Moreover, organisational support will create a lower turnover intention (Spector, 2006), more functional flexibility (Marcus & Van Dam, 2007), work engagement (Demerouti et al., 2001), willingness to work longer (Robbins & Judge, 2009) and more commitment to the organisation (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990). Organisational support is, however, not a mechanism that influences extrinsic motivation.

Promotion opportunities

Promotion opportunities are characterized by an advancement of an employee's rank or position in an organisational hierarchy system (Spector, 2006). Promotion may be an employee's reward for good performance i.e. positive appraisal. Promotion opportunities increase the extrinsic motivation of an employee (Robbins & Judge, 2009). Moreover, promotion opportunities will increase their effort and performance (Robbins & Judge, 2009). Promotion opportunities are not, however, mechanisms that influences intrinsic motivation.

Psychological contract

A psychological contract represents the mutual beliefs, perceptions, and informal obligations between an employer and an employee (Mullins, 2007). It sets the dynamics for the relationship and defines the detailed practicality of the work to be done. A good psychological contract increases both the intrinsic and extrinsic motivation of employees (Robbins & Judge, 2009). Moreover, psychological contract increases a whole variety of work outcomes, which are effort (Robbins & Judge, 2009), performance (Robbins & Judge, 2009), work engagement (Demerouti et al., 2001), well-being (Keyes, Smotkin, & Ryff, 2002), satisfaction (Fried & Ferris, 1987), responsibility (Hackman & Oldham, 1976) and functional flexibility (Marcus & Van Dam, 2007).

Social work relations

Social work relations are of great importance, which is explained clearly by the social exchange theory. The social exchange theory posits that "there are costs and rewards in all relationships, and how people feel about a relationship depends on their assessment of its costs and rewards, and the costs and rewards available to them in other relationships" (Gilovich, Keltner, & Nisbett, 2005, p. 124). Social work relations can be classified under the social exchange theory and is defined as "indicating the effectiveness of the member's working relationships to the peer group" (Seers, 1989, p. 119). Social work relations measure the willingness of a member to aid other members, to participate in ideas and feedback but also whether the same is received from the other members. Social work relations increase the extrinsic motivation of employees (Robbins & Judge, 2009). Furthermore, social work relations increase the effort and performance of employees (Robbins & Judge, 2009). Social work relations are not, however, mechanisms that influences intrinsic motivation.

Status

Status refers to the position of an employee in the organisation and whether the employee feels important (Marcus & Van Dam, 2007). Status increases the extrinsic motivation (Robbins & Judge, 2009) and, moreover, status will increase the effort and performance of employees (Robbins & Judge, 2009). Status is, however, not a mechanism that influences intrinsic motivation.

Transactional leadership

Transactional leadership is a dimension of leadership that focuses on clarifying employees' role and task requirements (Marcus & Van Dam, 2007). It provides followers with positive and negative rewards based on their performance. This kind of leadership does not increase intrinsic motivation but does increase extrinsic motivation. Moreover, transactional leadership increases effort and productivity (Robbins & Judge, 2009).

Transformational leadership

This dimension of leadership involves being a role model for followers that inspires them; challenging followers to take greater ownership of their work and understanding the strengths and weaknesses of followers so the leader can align followers with tasks that optimize their performance (Marcus & Van Dam, 2007). Transformational leadership increases the intrinsic motivation of employees (Robbins & Judge, 2009) and, moreover, increases well-being (Keyes et al., 2002), work engagement (Demerouti et al., 2001), commitment (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990), responsibility (Hackman & Oldham, 1976), functional flexibility (Spector, 2006), willingness to work longer (Robbins & Judge, 2009) and lower turnover intention (Spector, 2006). Transformational leadership is, however, not a mechanism that influences extrinsic motivation.

Challenge

Challenge refers to the content of the work, whether this is satisfactory and whether it is monotonous or interesting (Mullins, 2007). A high job challenge can reduce the effects of a stressful job on the individual and increase intrinsic motivation (Robbins & Judge, 2009) and, moreover, commitment (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990), well-being (Keyes et al., 2002), satisfaction (Fried & Ferris, 1987) and functional flexibility (Spector, 2006). Challenge is, however, not a mechanism that influences extrinsic motivation.**Skill variety**

Skill variety is defined as the number of different skills necessary to do a job. More specific, skill variety refers to the degree that the job is easy and repetitive or whether it is difficult and varying (Mullins, 2007). A high skill variety leads to more intrinsic motivation among employees (Robbins & Judge, 2009). Moreover, a high skill variety leads to a higher satisfaction (Fried & Ferris, 1987), a higher commitment (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990), responsibility and performance (Hackman & Oldham, 1976). Skill variety is, however, not a mechanism that influences extrinsic motivation.

Self-efficacy

Self-efficacy theory states that motivation and performance are determined in part by how effective people believe they can be (Bandura, 1982). In other words, people with high self-efficacy believe they are capable of accomplishing tasks and will be motivated to put forth effort. People with low self-efficacy do not believe they can accomplish tasks; they will not be motivated and will not put forth effort. A high self-efficacy also leads to a higher intrinsic motivation (Robbins & Judge, 2009) and, moreover, it leads to more work engagement (Demerouti et al., 2001), more responsibility (Hackman & Oldham, 1976) and more well-being (Keyes et al., 2002). Self-efficacy is, however, not a mechanism that influences extrinsic motivation.

Experienced meaningfulness

Experienced meaningfulness is defined as the value of a work goal or purpose, judged in relation to an individual's own ideals or standards (Hackman & Oldham, 1980). Lack of meaning in one's work can lead to alienation or disengagement from one's work (Aktouf, 1992). Experienced meaningfulness in work leads to a higher intrinsic motivation (Robbins & Judge, 2009), more well-being (Keyes et al., 2002), more willingness to work longer (Robbins & Judge, 2009) and a lower turnover intention (Spector, 2006). Experienced meaningfulness is, however, not a mechanism that influences extrinsic motivation.

Conscientiousness

Conscientiousness is defined as a sense of order, perseverance and discipline, which is important for work effectiveness (Mullins, 2007). Conscientiousness increases the intrinsic motivation of employees (Robbins & Judge, 2009). Additionally, conscientiousness leads to more well-being (Keyes et al., 2002), more commitment (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990), responsibility (Hackman & Oldham, 1976) and functional flexibility (Marcus & Van Dam, 2007).

Summing up, what all these organisational factors have in common is that they are related to intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation or both. Also, the organisational factors are related to the work outcomes. This indicates the importance of motivation as a mediator between organisational factors and work outcomes.

Intrinsic motivation

The first mediation factor is intrinsic motivation. Intrinsically motivated behaviour is alleged to derive from and satisfy innate psychological needs, including needs for competence and autonomy (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Kasser & Ryan, 1996). According to Deci (1980), perceptions of personal (as opposed to external) control satisfy these needs, and constitute the fundamental feature distinguishing intrinsically motivated behaviour from extrinsically motivated behaviour. Moreover, intrinsic motivation is said to exist when behaviour is performed for its own sake rather than to obtain material or social reinforcements and results in the many positive work factors mentioned earlier in this paper. A high intrinsic motivation will increase commitment, work engagement, willingness to work longer, functional flexibility, well-being, responsibility, satisfaction and intention to continue working. Moreover, a high intrinsic motivation will increase job performance and effort on the long term (Rickli, 2010).

Extrinsic motivation

The second mediating factor is extrinsic motivation. Extrinsically motivated behaviours are actions that result in the attainment of externally administered rewards, including pay, material possessions, prestige, promotion and positive evaluations from others. These rewards provide satisfaction and pleasure that the task itself may not provide (Petri, 1991). Extrinsic motivation is not as beneficial for employees and organisations as intrinsic motivation. Rickli (2010) found that extrinsic motivation only relates to two of the positive outcomes mentioned above. A high extrinsic motivation will increase job performance and effort on the short term.

These powerful influencers of employee behaviour in turn, as mentioned before, influence work outcomes. The ten crucial work outcomes and their influence are described next.

Job performance

The first of the ten work factors is job performance which was defined by Campbell (1990) as behaviour; it is something done by the employee. This concept differentiates performance from outcomes. Outcomes are the result of an individual's performance, but they are also the result of other influences. In other words, there are more factors that determine outcomes than just an employee's behaviours and actions. Campbell (1990) allows for exceptions when defining performance as behaviour. For instance, he clarifies that performance does not have to be a directly observable action of an individual. It can consist of mental productions such as answers or decisions. However, performance needs to be under the individual's control, regardless of whether the performance of interest is mental or behavioural. Moreover, job performance can be seen as task specific behaviour, which includes those behaviours that an individual undertakes as part of a job. They are the core substantive tasks that delineate one job from another. Studies also indicated the results of a higher job performance. For instance, Robbins and Judge (2009) indicate that a higher job performance is strongly related to a greater output and in some cases even related to organisational effectiveness (however, that depends largely on the type of organisation). Janssen and Van Yperen (2004) found that job performance is related to innovative job performance meaning that people who perform better may become more innovative in their performance. More importantly, it should be noted that studies on the results of job performance are not readily available. This is because job performance is seen as a dependent or outcome factor.

Effort

The second of the ten work factors is effort. Effort is characterized by the direction, duration and intensity of human input (Robbins & Judge, 2009) and results in a better performance (Christen, Iyerorganisation, & Soberman, 2006). However, effort is costly for an employee, which implies that there is a conflict of interest between the employer, who wants the employee to put in a lot of effort, and the employee, who wants the salary with the minimum possible effort (Hart & Holmstrom, 1987). Christen and colleagues (2006) found that indeed high effort is a cost that makes employees less happy (high effort decreases job satisfaction) indicating that an optimum level of effort should be found instead of demanding the maximum level of effort from each employee.

Commitment

The third of the ten work factors is commitment. A committed employee is believed to be someone who stays with the organisation no matter what happens, attends work regularly, works hard, protects the assets of the company, and shares the goals of the organisation (Allen & Meyer, 1990). Commitment consists of three distinct themes; "affective", "continuance" and "normative" commitment, which make up a three-component model of commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Affective commitment alludes to employees' emotional/psychological attachment to, identification with, and involvement in, the organisation (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Employees with a strong affective commitment stay with an organisation just because they want to (Meyer, Allen & Smith, 1993). Continuance commitment relates to the recognition of the costs associated with leaving a particular organisation (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Employees with this kind of commitment keep working for the organisation because they need to (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Finally, normative commitment reflects a perceived duty and responsibility to continue employment with an organisation (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Employees with this kind of commitment experience an inherent feeling that they ought to remain employed with the organisation they work for (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Allen and Meyer (1990) explicitly stressed the fact that employees can experience all three forms of organisational commitment in varying degrees.

Siu (2002) found that commitment, especially affective and normative commitment lead to pro-active behaviour, less stress and a higher general well-being. Continuance commitment, however, results in more negative behaviour such as lower participation, providing less feedback and utilizing fewer skills to complete a task (Allen & Meyer, 1990).

Work engagement

The fourth of the ten work factors is work engagement, which is defined as "a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is marked by vigor, dedication, and absorption" (Schaufeli, Salanove, Gonzalez-Roma, & Bakker, 2002, p.74). Vigor is characterized by high levels of energy and mental resilience while working, the willingness to invest effort in one's work, and persistence even in the face of difficulties. Dedication refers to being strongly involved in one's work, and experiencing a sense of significance, enthusiasm, inspiration, pride and challenge. Absorption is characterized by being fully concentrated and happily engrossed in one's work, whereby time passes quickly and one has difficulties detaching oneself from work.

Willingness to work longer

The fifth of ten work factors is the willingness to work longer. As the Dutch population is getting older the willingness to work longer is getting more and more important. In 2011 the baby boom-generation will begin to retire and in 2013, 34% of the labour force will be older than 50 years, which means that the active labour force will decrease (CBS, 2007). Furthermore, in 2030 approximately four million people in the Netherlands will be older than 65, which is 25% of the Dutch society (CBS, 2007). Moreover, researches show that elderly people are healthier these days and life expectancy is increasing. However, people quit sooner than the retirement age of 65 (CBS, 2007; Nauta, De Vroome, Cox, Korver & Kraan, 2005). The Netherlands belongs is one of the countries that has the highest exit flow and the lowest participation rate of older employees. Therefore, the Netherlands is one of the countries where aging can have dramatic consequences (Theeuwes & Zijl, 2001).

Studies show that, overall, it appears that older workers decline in willingness to work longer. Older employees might have a stronger retirement intention because they are closer to retirement age, and because they might have already started retirement planning. In addition, Warr (2001) showed that priorities for older employees are shifting. Money and status become less important for instance, while family life gets more important. Moreover, research showes significant differences in willingness to work longer for employees between 50 and 65 years of age (Van Dam, Van Der Vorst & Van Der Heijden, 2009). Van Leeuwen (2009), for instance, showed that older workers between 50 and 60 years of age were intrinsically motivated and showed no declines in willingness to work longer. On the other hand, employees from 60 years of age and above showed strong declines in willingness to work longer. Taking the step to looking at possible results of willingness to work longer, one conclusion can be formed: willingness to work longer is a strong dependent, outcome, variable which is why, until now, no research has been done to indicate the results of willingness to work longer.

Functional flexibility

The sixth work factor is functional flexibility. Functional flexibility is characterized by willing to change jobs within an organisation, willing to combine different functions and tasks, willing to invest time and effort in personal development and willing to work at different geographical locations (Appelbaum & Batt, 1994). Van den Berg and Van der Velde (2005) found that higher functional flexibility will result in taking more initiative, more trust in management and a higher self-efficacy.

Well-being

The seventh work factor is general well-being, which is characterized by feeling and being mentally and physically healthy (Goldberg & Hillier 1979), which includes a low blood pressure and heart rate and the absence of anxiety and depression (Ivancevich, Matteson, Freedman, & Phillips, 1990). A good general well-being is important for many outcomes such as experiencing less stress and tension, being more satisfied, a lower chance of experiencing burnout, a higher productivity in quantity and quality and a lower absentee and accident rate (Sulsky & Smith, 2005).

Responsibility

The eighth work descriptor is responsibility. Responsibility at work includes feeling responsible for tasks and results but also includes the feeling of having enough responsibility at work (Elizur, 1984). Early research already indicated the positive outcomes of responsibility at work such as a high internal work motivation, a high quality of work performance, a high job satisfaction, low absenteeism and low turnover (Hackman & Oldham, 1974). However, too much responsibility can be detrimental to an employee's well-being. Too much responsibility causes stress (Parker, Baltes, Young, Huff, Altmann, LaCost, & Roberts, 2003) and in the long run even burnout (Sulsky & Smith, 2005). Therefore organisations should strive for an optimum balance of responsibility.

Satisfaction

Satisfaction is the ninth work factor and is defined as a positive feeling about one's job resulting from an evaluation of its characteristics (Robbins & Judge, 2009). Satisfaction is again a very positive outcome and research indicates that a high satisfaction results in low absenteeism, feeling of autonomy, a positive mood and higher job performance (Judge, Thoresen, Bono, & Patton, 2001).

Intention to continue working

The intention to continue working is the tenth work factor and is the positive counterpart of turnover. The intention to continue working is defined as the voluntary act to continue working for the organisation (Shacklock, Brunetto, & Nelson, 2009). Again, intention to continue working is seen as a dependent, outcome variable which is why little research has been done to indicate the psychological effects. However, Robbins and Judge (2009) indicated that a low intention to continue working involves the loss of people the organisation does not want to lose and therefore hinders the organisations effectiveness. Moreover, a low intention to continue working results in increased recruiting, selection and training costs.

Return on investment for organisations

A large meta-analysis by Harter, Schmidt, Killham and Agrawal (2009) provided a whole array of positive outcomes, in other words, return on investment for work engagement. The study showed that a high (7.5 or higher on a scale of 1 to 10) compared to a low work engagement (2.5 or lower on a scale of 1 to 10) results in 12% more customer loyalty, 16% more profitability, 18% higher productivity, 37% less turnover, 49% less safety incidents, 27% less shrinkage (due to employee theft, customer theft, or lost merchandise), 37% less absenteeism, 41% less patient safety incidents and 60% less quality defects. These very positive outcomes indicate the importance of work engagement among employees.

Conclusion

This study provides a description of seventeen organisational factors, motivation, ten crucial employee work factors and what their effect is on each other and the employees and organisation. The studies show the positive results that can be achieved by initiating an increase in the organisational factors, motivation and work outcomes. Moreover, this paper shows that by investing in the organisational factors they will cause a rise in both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, which, in turn can be seen as the mediating factors. By increasing intrinsic and, in small part, extrinsic motivation, organisations will indirectly increase the remaining ten work factors whereby the results of the factors mentioned in this article will occur. In turn, the results will make it possible for employees to reach their full potential and optimum well-being.

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