

**EXAMINING  
THE INFLUENCE OF  
PERSON-ENVIRONMENT  
FIT ON THE RELATIONSHIP  
BETWEEN JOB CHARACTERISTICS  
AND TASK PERFORMANCE: A STUDY OF THE  
PUBLIC SERVICES IN KOTA KINABALU SABAH**

PERPUSTAKAAN  
UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SABAH

**SANJAY DIMITRI ESWAR**

**SCHOOL OF BUSINESS AND ECONOMICS  
UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SABAH**

**2013**



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**DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN FULFILLMENT  
FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER IN BUSINESS  
ADMINISTRATION**

**SCHOOL OF BUSINESS AND ECONOMICS  
UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SABAH  
2013**



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JOB CHARACTERISTICS AND TASK PERFORMANCE: A STUDY OF THE STUDY PUBLIC SERVICES IN  
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## CERTIFICATION

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23 September 2013



## **ABSTRACT**

### **EXAMINING THE INFLUENCE OF PERSON-ENVIRONMENT FIT ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN JOB CHARACTERISTICS AND JOB PERFORMANCE: A STUDY OF THE PUBLIC SERVICES IN KOTA KINABALU SABAH**

The main objective of this study is to examine the relationships between the five dimensions of Job Characteristics (Skill Variety, Task Identity, Task Significance, Autonomy and Feedback) and job performance based on the dimension of Task Performance. The other objective of the study is to examine the moderating effects of two dimensions of Person-Environment Fit which are Person-Job Fit and Person-Organization Fit on the relationship between Job Characteristics and Task Performance. This study was carried out towards the employees of the public services organizations in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah. Data from two hundred fifty one employees from twelve government agencies were analyzed using Pearson Correlation as to determine the relationships between the research variables. Further, multiple regression analysis was utilized to determine the direct relationships between the aforementioned dimensions of Job Characteristics and Task Performance. The results of this study revealed that only four dimensions of Job Characteristics (i.e. Task Identity, Task Significance, Autonomy and Feedback) were found to have significant and positive effects towards Task Performance of the employees whereas the dimension of Skill Variety was found to be insignificant. Furthermore, the results from hierarchical regression analyses have revealed that only Person-Organization Fit had significant moderation effect on the overall relationship with an observed significant interaction towards the dimension of Skill Variety. Based on these findings, practical implications to towards the theory, policies and practices were highlighted. Limitations of the study were also addressed and suggestions for future research were proposed accordingly.

## **ABSTRAK**

*Objektif utama kajian ini adalah untuk mengkaji perhubungan di antara lima dimensi yang terkandung dalam Ciri-Ciri Pekerjaan iaitu kepelbagaian dalam kemahiran kerja, identiti kerja, kepentingan kerja, autonomi dan maklumbalas dari kerja dengan Prestasi Kerja. Objektif yang seterusnya adalah untuk mengkaji pengaruh dua daripada dimensi keserasian individu-persekitaran kerja iaitu keserasian individu-kerja dan keserasian individu-organisasi. Kajian ini telah dijalankan di kalangan pekerja organisasi perkhidmatan umum yang terletak di Kota Kinabalu, Sabah. Data daripada dua ratus lima puluh satu pekerja dari dua belas agensi kerajaan telah dianalisa menggunakan regresi berganda serentak untuk mengenalpasti perhubungan diantara setiap dimensi Ciri-Ciri Pekerjaan dengan Prestasi Kerja. Hasil analisa tersebut menunjukkan bahawa terdapat empat dimensi yang memiliki pengaruh yang jelas dengan prestasi kerja iaitu identiti kerja, kepentingan kerja, autonomi dan maklumbalas dari kerja manakala kepelbagaian dalam kemahiran kerja tidak menunjukkan pengaruh yang penting. Sehubungan dengan itu, hasil daripada analisa regresi hirarki berganda telah menunjukkan bahawa keserasian individu-organisasi memiliki pengaruh yang ketara terhadap perhubungan diantara Ciri-Ciri Pekerjaan dan Prestasi Kerja dengan interaksi yang nyata terhadap kepelbagaian dalam kemahiran kerja. Berdasarkan hasil analisa yang terlibat dalam kajian ini, implikasi terhadap teori, polisi dan juga praktikal telah dikenalpasti dan limitasi dalam kajian juga telah diketengahkan. Selain daripada itu, cadangan untuk kajian di masa depan juga telah diusulkan.*



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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of Study

#### 1.1.1 Overview of Job Performance

Organizational performance has been considered as one of the important aspects that shape up a firm's objective and overall direction (Bukhari and Ali, 2009). Organizations in the present time would strive to discover ways to achieve maximization of performance and efficiency due to the changes in technology, effect of globalization and the growing competitive forces (Shirazi, 2012). This is also based on the fact that business environment had become more complex that it has shifted to a more challenging marketplace and exposed to greater risks in addition to new opportunities (Samad and Amri, 2011). Organizational performance can be contributed from the job performance of employees (June and Mahmood, 2011). This is based on the notion in which workforce that are equipped with the right knowledge and skills will be able to assist the organization to compete in the related industry or sector in the national as well as international level (Tomaka, 2001).

For this reason, firms in the modern age had begun to emphasize the importance of developing proactive employees who can engage themselves in positive behaviors and avoid negative attitudes that would be detrimental towards their performance (Samad and Amri, 2011). Hence, job performance has been considered as one of the most important behavioral outcomes in the studies of industrial psychology (Kahya, 2007). Studies pertaining to the prediction of job performance for improvement purposes have always been one of the important scopes of research in addition to employees' training, job redesigning and other related areas.





Employee behavior in the context of job performance can be evaluated in term is Task Performance or in-role performance, and extra-role performance or also known as organizational citizenship behavior (Borman and Motowidlo, 1993). The need to improve Task Performance among employees is important as high performing employees are more likely to drive the organizations to achieve its strategic aims whilst sustaining its competitive advantage effectively (Dessler, 2011). It is believed that individuals with excellent performance would have the ability to fulfill the assigned tasks as stated in their job descriptions effectively whilst meeting the expectation by managers; and generally accomplish their work targets according to the standards of the firm (Bohlander *et al.*, 2001).

Thus, Task Performance of employees could largely contribute to the overall productivity and profitability of organizations as well as supporting the pursuit of the firm on becoming market leader (Samad and Amri, 2011). Studies about job performance have been related to the essence of motivation and job satisfaction (Shirazi, 2011). Employees who are motivated and personally satisfied with their work are believed to participate actively in organizational activities and committed to improve their efficiencies at work. In relation to this, studies had begun to consider the essence of job enrichment in promoting positive behavior among the employees (Shirazi, 2011). The basis of job enrichment lies in the notion that by expanding the job scopes of employees to include certain characteristics of work would uphold motivation and satisfaction among them. This was developed based on the approach of job design as explained in the Job Characteristics Theory proposed by Hackman and Oldham (1976).

### **1.1.2 Overview of Job Redesign Intervention**

Job Characteristics Model was developed as a form of work intervention through job redesign approach for the purpose of employee improvement in the sense of motivation, job satisfaction, performance and reduction of turnover or absenteeism (Shirazi, 2011). Therefore, job enrichment has been considered as a form of job-

redesign strategy through interventions in job content for the purpose of enhancement in a way to make it more interesting (Lunenberg, 2011). Employees who hold enriched jobs are believed to be responsible and motivated by simply undertaking the assign tasks. This is supported by the notion that work design does positively influence the behavior of employees that would result in high performance, satisfaction, motivation and involvement (Indartono *et al.*, 2010). Therefore, it is rational to consider that job enrichment plays an important role towards enhancing job performance.

### **1.1.3 Overview of Employee Selection**

In addition to job enrichment, another important element that supports the maintenance of high productivity in public and private sectors is the selection of right employees for the intended jobs in organizations (Hunter and Hunter, 1984). Employee selection is part of Human Resources Management practices with the main objective of selecting candidates that possess the right fit for the job (Werbel and DeMarie, 2005). To meet this objective, the concept of Person-Environment Fit has been utilised to align the fit between the employees and their job in order to support the firms' overall strategy of achieving competitive advantage and performance through the selection of suitable individuals (Werbel and DeMarie, 2005). Person-Environment Fit works in a way that congruence would be achieved between the employees' knowledge, skills, values and behavior; with the context of the job (Werbel and DeMarie, 2005). When congruence is achieved, both employees and employers would gain mutual benefits in distinct aspects.

For instance, employees are believed to develop positive behavior at work that promotes higher productivity, organizational commitment and morality when fits exist between them at their job (Werbel and DeMarie, 2005). On the other hand, employers would benefit from lower staff turnover and absenteeism; and higher employee retention. Therefore, human resources practices have considered that the concept of Person-Environment Fit is important in aligning the capability of



employees through the selection process practices with the overall organizational performance goals (Werbel and DeMarie, 2005). In aligning domain between Person-Environment Fit and Employee Selection, two common types of fit that has captured much focus among the employers or recruiters and employees or job applicants are Person-Job Fit and Person-Organization Fit (Carless, 2005). For instance, Person-Job Fit contributes to the needs of finding applicants with the right knowledge and skills to carry out the job (Sekiguchi, 2004). On the other hand, Person-Organization Fit is regarded as the fit between the applicant and organization in broader aspects of the firm such as its attributes. It has been considered as the key to sustaining committed employees who are flexible to contribute to organizations that compete in a competitive environment (Sekiguchi, 2004). One practical aspect of Person-Job Fit and Person-Organization Fit in the context of employee selection is that, recruiters would often evaluate extend of Person-Job Fit and Person-Organization Fit in job applicants during employment interviews based on their perceptions of congruence between the job applicant and the intended post with respect to these types of fits (Sekiguchi, 2004).

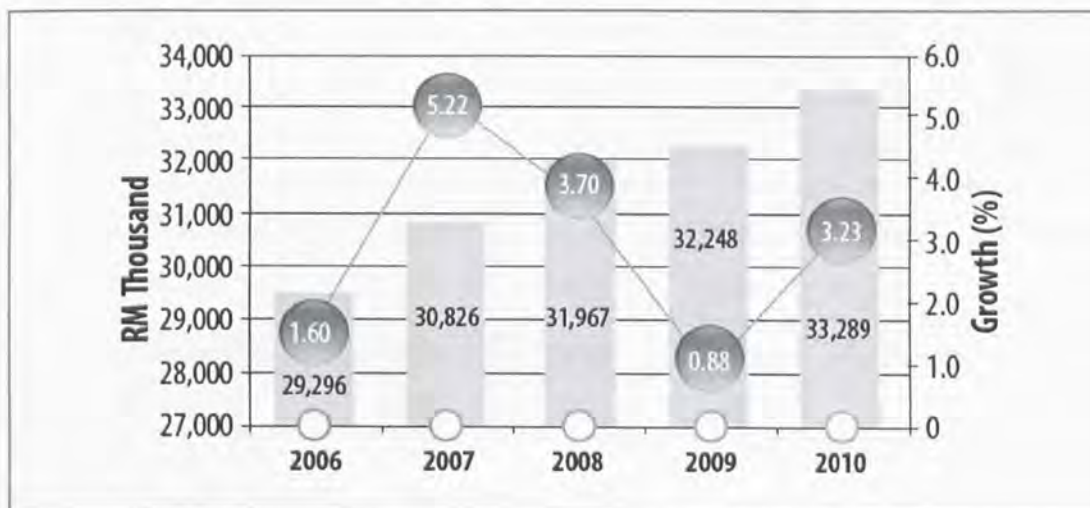
#### **1.1.4 Overview of the Malaysian Public Sector Productivity**

The essence of job enrichment and employee selection could certainly contribute to the studies pertaining to job performance. As stated previously, job performance of employees would significantly affect the performance of the organization which includes its productivity and financial achievement (Abu-Jarad *et al.*, 2010). This notion is without exception also applies in the context of public sector in Malaysia. In line with the country's continuous effort to achieve economic growth and socio-economic improvement, the need for public sector employees to acquire the right attitude and skills is important to manifest high performance at work (Samad and Amri, 2011). These workforce would have to equip themselves with the right knowledge and capabilities in order to support the country's pursuit to achieve competitive labour productivity levels that are comparable with other countries (June and Mahmood, 2011). However, over the past several years, the growth of productivity in the public sector has been inconsistent in terms of overall

productivity (see Figure 1.1), government revenue per employee (see Figure 1.2) and government divisional productivity (see Figure 1.3); and generally constitutes a lower growth as compared to the private sector (Malaysia Productivity Corporation, 2011).

The national productivity levels have increased in the recent years but it was mainly contributed from other sectors such as manufacturing and services sectors (Cheng, 2013). However, despite the sectors that contribute to the productivity of the country, the overall national labour productivity in Malaysia is still lower than other countries such as United States, Japan, United Kingdom, South Korea, Singapore, India and Taiwan (Cheng, 2013). The productivity value of Malaysian workers as of 2012 was recorded at RM43, 952 per year with average annual productivity growth of 4.5%, but none of which were close to the performances of other countries as mentioned previously. Thus, the present study intends to contribute to the area of productivity improvement through the context of employee job performance in the public sector of Malaysia.

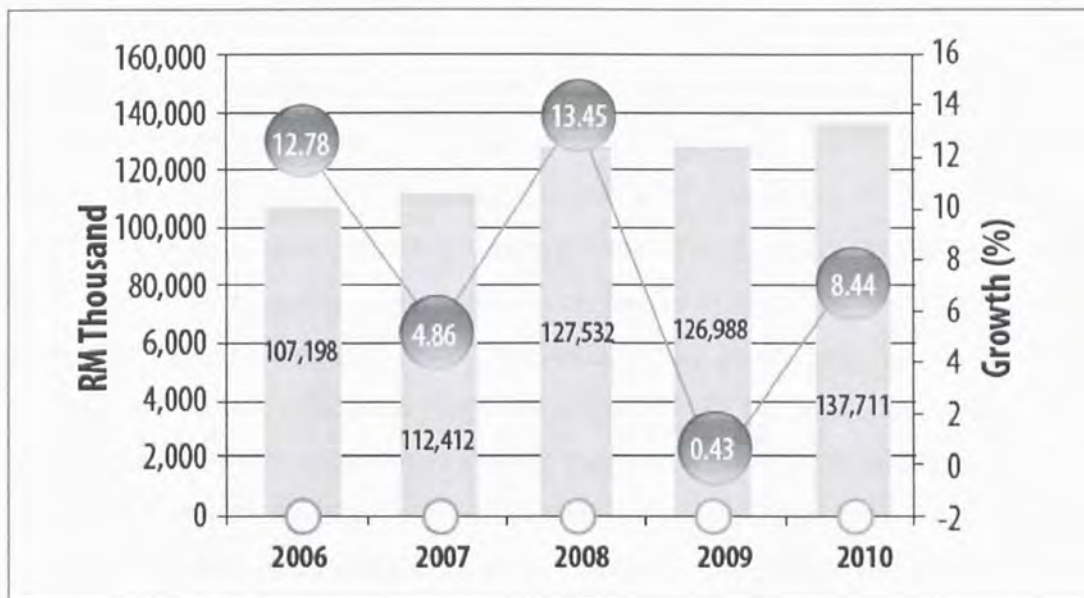
**Figure 1.1: Malaysian Public Sector Productivity from 2006-2010**



Source: Malaysia Productivity Corporation (2011)



**Figure 1.2: Government Revenue per Employee from 2006-2010**



Source: Malaysia Productivity Corporation (2011)

**Figure 1.3: Public Service Sub-Sector Productivity from 2006-2010**

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
<b>General public administration (RM)</b>	60,499	61,976	64,129	64,876	67,155
<b>Growth (%)</b>	6.65	2.44	3.47	1.16	3.51
<b>Security Services (RM)</b>	22,872	24,616	26,924	27,292	28,355
<b>Growth (%)</b>	1.86	7.63	9.38	1.37	3.89
<b>Economic Services (RM)</b>	28,798	28,200	30,249	30,266	31,908
<b>Growth (%)</b>	0.43	-2.08	7.27	0.06	5.43
<b>Social Services (RM)</b>	29,006	30,842	31,181	31,376	32,223
<b>Growth (%)</b>	1.52	6.33	1.10	0.63	2.70

Source: Malaysia Productivity Corporation (2011)

## 1.2 Research Problem

### 1.2.1 Theoretical Issues

A review of past literatures has revealed several personal outcomes as a result of Job Characteristics (Houkes *et al.*, 2001; Millette and Gagné, 2008; Elanain, 2008; Azash *et al.*, 2012; Bhatti *et al.*, 2012; Na-Nan and Pukkeeree, 2013). In view of these literatures, researchers have suggested that the effect of Job Characteristics should also be investigated against behavioral results in spite of personal outcomes. For instance, in the empirical research carried out by Bhatti *et al.* (2012) on their investigation on the effects of Job Characteristics on personal outcomes which included job satisfaction and internal work motivation among the employees of the banking industry in Pakistan, the researchers have suggested that the effects of Job Characteristics should also be studied against the behavioral outcomes as predicted in the original theory of Job Characteristics, with due reference to the Job Characteristics Model.

In view of the literatures pertaining to behavioral outcomes, job performance has been conceptualised as a form of behavioral output in the field of industrial psychology (Motowidlo, 2003: 39). However, in relation to Job Characteristics, the effect of Job Characteristics on job performance was notably inconsistent (Griffin *et al.*, 1981; Lunenberg, 2011; Azash *et al.*, 2012). Inconsistencies in the outcomes of Job Characteristics might be rooted from culture differences in the organizations of different countries, which specifically influence how individuals would experience their jobs (Hackman and Oldham, 2010). In relation to culture differences, Shirazi *et al.* (2012) who carried out the investigation of Job Characteristics in an oriental culture has stated that studies pertaining to Job Characteristics Model have been conducted mainly in western countries and that more empirical evidence are needed in non-western countries in order to understand its significance.



Therefore, based on these findings, the present study intends to examine the effect of Job Characteristics through the utilisation Job Characteristics Model on job performance as to contribute to the inconsistencies noted in the results of past literatures. Furthermore, this study is to be applied in the Malaysian context as to further acknowledge the importance of Job Characteristics Model in a non-western culture. In the context of job performance, the effect of Job Characteristics can be evaluated against the constructs of Task Performance. For instance, in the conceptual paper published by Johari and Yahya (2009) in relating organizational structure, Job Characteristics and job performance; the researchers have stated that minimal focus has been given to examine the effect of Job Characteristics on job performance based the constructs of Task Performance in the Malaysian context. Therefore, the current study proceeds to investigate the effect of Job Characteristics on job performance based on the construct of Task Performance.

In addition, the Job Characteristics Model had also been linked to the concept of Person-Environment Fit. For instance, in the review provided by Goštautaitė and Bučiūnienė (2010) on the conceptual integration between Job Characteristics Model and Person-Environment Fit, the researchers have suggested that future studies with regards to Job Characteristics should attempt to classify the concept within the perspective of Person-Environment Fit in order to enhance the contribution from studies with regards to job design. This is because the Job Characteristics Model was previously criticised in some literature for its incomprehensiveness due to the lack of focus on person factor such as employee job fit (e.g. Jans and McMahon, 1989). Therefore, it is suggested that future research should concentrate more on the investigation of individual differences that can affect the relationship between Job Characteristics and its associated outcomes as hypothesized in the Job Characteristics Model. In relation to this notion, Kulik *et al.* (1987) have provided a review on theoretical concepts of work design as an approach to Person-Environment Fit. Kulik *et al.* (1987) provided conceptual application of Person-Environment Fit in the Job Characteristics Model, where the fit between the individuals and their jobs would be regarded as individual differences as it describes the distinct characteristics of the job holders.



Based on the Job Characteristics Model, the individual differences or person factors are posited to moderate the relationship between Job Characteristics and its outcomes (Hackman and Oldham, 1976; Kulik *et. al*, 1987; Goštautaitė and Bučiūnienė, 2010). Therefore, in line with these analyses pertaining to the link between Job Characteristics and Person-Environment Fit, the present study intends to incorporate the concept of Person-Environment Fit as a form of moderator into the relationship between Job Characteristics and job performance. Moreover, this objective also supports the statement made by Baron and Kenny (1987) where the introduction of moderators on specific relationships between a predictor and criterion that are found to be weak or inconsistent, would be a strategic consideration. Hence, the introduction of Person-Environment Fit as a moderator would be a strategic consideration in response to the inconsistencies of outcomes in the context of job performance that would be resulted from Job Characteristics.

### **1.2.2 Population Issues**

As stated previously, this study is intended for the Malaysian context. However, the focus of this study will be directed towards the employees who work in organizations of the public services sector. This is because based on the empirical study carried out by Salleh *et al.* (2011) on the effect of motivation towards job performance among the employees of the state government sector located at east coast of Peninsular Malaysia; namely Kelantan, Terengganu and Pahang; the researchers argued that empirical studies pertaining to job performance in the context of state public sector as a result from the influence of employee motivation, is still lacking and limited. Furthermore, the authors have further suggested that similar studies (i.e. with regards to motivation and performance among employees in the state government sector) should also be applied to other states in Malaysia. Therefore, this study will precede its research on similar population located in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah. In addition, future research should also embark on the investigation of employees' perception of their role which could also influence their motivation at work which could subsequently affect their job performance (Salleh *et al.*, 2011).

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