

CRITICAL REVIEW OF NEED FOR ACHIEVEMENT EFFECT ON THE JOB PERFORMANCE-JOB ATTITUDE RELATIONSHIP

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Abstrak: Sebagian besar studi empiris tentang perilaku kerja-sikap kerja difokuskan pada hubungan antara kinerja dan sikap kerja tanpa mempertimbangkan faktor lain yang mungkin mempengaruhi hubungan tersebut. Kebutuhan atas pencapaian merupakan suatu variabel disposisional yang berpotensi untuk memoderasi asosiasi antara kinerja dan sikap kerja. Studi yang dilakukan oleh Steers (1975) ini sengaja dipilih karena merupakan studi awal yang menguji pengaruh kebutuhan atas pencapaian pada hubungan antara kinerja dengan sikap kerja, dalam hal ini keterlibatan kerja dan kepuasan kerja. Kelemahan utama studi ini terletak pada metode penelitian terkait dengan operasionalisasi dan pengukuran variabel-variabel yang diteliti. Metode pemilihan sampel, pengajuan masalah, dan ketiadaan simpulan, merupakan kelemahan lain studi ini. Terlepas dari kelemahan-kelemahan tersebut, studi ini memberi kontribusi berharga pada ilmu keperilakuan karena mempertimbangkan peranan valen dan instrumentalitas dalam hubungan perilaku kerja-sikap kerja.

Kata-kata kunci: kinerja, keterlibatan kerja, kepuasan kerja, kebutuhan akan pencapaian.

Introduction

A sizeable portion of behavioral science research in organization has focused on the issue of job satisfaction and there certainly has been no shortage of research on the relationship between job attitudes and job satisfaction in particular and various job behaviors, especially job performance (Fisher, 1980). Noting that the large variables in correlation across studies necessitate a better understanding of the condition under which job satisfaction and performance are related. There has been considerable debate concerning the existence and nature of relationship between the two variables. According to Schleicher et al (2004), whereas social psychologists would argue that attitude do predict corresponding behavior, industrial organizational psychologist continue to hold the view that the most focal attitude (job satisfaction) is unrelated to the most focal behavior on the job (job performance). Additionally, Schwab and Cummings (1970) note that there are three major points of view concerning theoretical propositions about the relationship between job satisfaction and job performance: 1) the view that satisfaction leads to performance, a position generally associated with early human relation concept, 2) the view that performance lead to satisfaction, a recently stated position, and 3) the view that the satisfaction-performance relationship is moderated by a number of variables, a

position which gained acceptance in the fifties and continues to be reflected in current research. In moving from this proposition, Steers's (1975) *Effect of Need for Achievement on the Job Performance-Job Attitude Relationship* was carried out based on the third view:

The majority of previous investigations focused exclusively on the relation between performance and satisfaction, and did not consider other possible factor that might be effect such a relationship. Based on these reviews more recent interest has focused on attempts to identify those potential variables in organizational settings that might serve to enhance the job performance-job satisfaction association.....Following this lead, the present investigation studied the potential effects of need for achievement on the relationship between job performance and two job attitudes (p. 678).

His objective in this study is to examine the potential effect of need for achievement (n-Ach) on job performance-job attitude relationship. Steers' study is chosen to be criticized because this is a preliminary study that considers the role of valence and instrumentality in job attitude-job performance relationship. First, summarizing the major concern of the article, I will continue by critically discuss major weaknesses of the study. I will focus my discussion on research method particularly concerning operational and measurement of variables; determination of population and sampling method; and choice of variables. Second, discussion of issues related to statement of problem, limitation of study and conclusion are offered. Finally, I will conclude with some observations about its valuable contribution to behavioral research in organization.

Overview

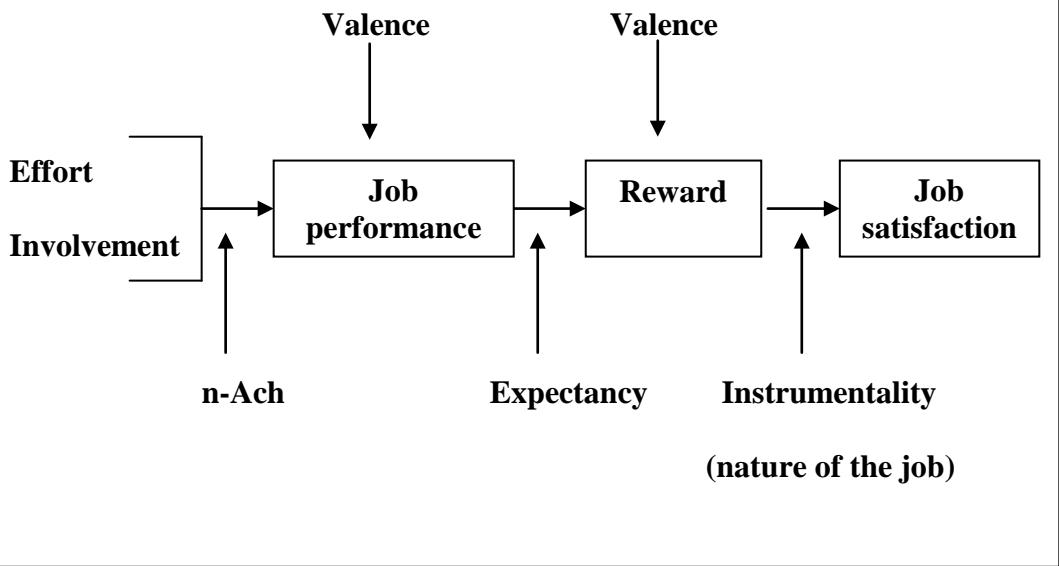
This article started by highlighting the evolution of research concerning job satisfaction-job performance relationship. There is little evidence about the relationship between the two variables. On one hand, several researchers pointed out that this condition exists due to measurement error. On the other hand, Steers (1975) argues that this is due to neglecting the possibility of other variable for strengthen or weaken the relation between the two variables. He continues by stating that leads to this trend, there were several studies considered the potential effect of other variables in affecting job satisfaction-job performance relationship. Such researches investigated work environment, reward level, employee need strength and other individual differences as moderator of the relationship. Based on these previous changed by: researches, Steers carried out his study to examine the effect of need for achievement (n-Ach) regarding the relationship between job attitudes in this case, job involvement and job satisfaction; and job performance.

How does n-Ach affect the job performance-job attitude relationship? Using model of other findings Steers argues that high n-Ach individuals tend to place higher valence on the attainment of their performance objectives than will low n-Ach individuals. With high expectation on achievement of the outcome, subject with high n-Ach will make greater effort and deeper involvement toward his/her job. As a consequence, high n-Ach subject tend to place higher valence in the form of intrinsic or extrinsic reward, on the attainment of their performance objectives than will low n-Ach person. Accordingly, when such rewards are perceived as being

achievement related, the individual will tend to be satisfied. A good place to depict this flow of thought is by scrutinizing the model in Figure 1.

The model includes two job-related attitude i.e. involvement and satisfaction. It means that when achievement-oriented signal are exist in the job, it is stated that high n-Ach subject will tend to become deeply involved in their task, which in turn will contribute to high performance. Reward meet initial performance expectations, then this level of performance lead to job satisfaction. Such a condition will occur when the tasks are of challenging nature. Therefore, the nature of job became instrumental of the sequence. Furthermore, in this case, reward can be posited as first level of outcome and job satisfaction as second level of outcome. In contrast, low n-Ach individual tend do not motivates to achieve high level of performance. Instead, they seek other kind of need such as security, independence, friendship, socialization, and other things similar. Thus, there is no reason to expect that the fulfillment of the needs will be related to job performance.

Figure 1. Model of Effect for Achievement Need on the Job Performance-Job Attitude Relationship



Source: review of Steers' article.

In sum, Steers argues that n-Ach does appear to represent an important variable in the job performance-job attitude relationship. This argument is proved by the result which supports the hypothesis that 'a positive relationship would be found between both attitudes (satisfaction) and performance for high n-Ach subject and that no such relationship would be found for low n-Ach subject. He stresses that the challenging nature of the task or the job become a prerequisite of the relationship to be occurred.

The study uses questionnaire and adjective check list to test the effect of n-Ach on the job attitude-job performance relationship addresses to female first level supervisors in a large public utility. Four main investigated variables are performance, job satisfaction, job involvement, and n-Ach. In addition, demographic information comprises of company tenure, job tenure, age, and education, were also considered for testing the relationship for the whole samples before n-Ach is taken into consideration. Pearson product moment correlation was implemented for the entire samples, then separate correlation were run for high and low n-Ach subjects in endeavor to test the potential effect of n-Ach on the association between job performance and job attitude.

Relevance to My Knowledge of Attitude-Performance Relationship

A sizable portion of behavior science research in organizations has increasingly focused on possible connections between job attitude and various job behaviors, particularly job performance (Schwab and Cumming, 1970). Steers's study which was based on Murrays's (1938) theory of need for achievement, is an important contribution to that inclination since it considered one kind of personal disposition, namely n-Ach, as a potential variable affecting job attitude-job performance association. McClelland points out that N-ach is one of three types of personality-based needs, with the others being need for affiliation and need for power (Amyx and Alford, 2005). This study is also of particular interest because it shows similar result with those based on different theory of motivation such as Hackman and Lawler's, which used the need theory of Maslow. However, I find the study problematic for it is not specifically explains what the result of Hackman and Lawler's study was.

This study also gives further insight related to the role of valence and instrumentality in job attitude-job performance relationship. In addition, Steers is right in asserting the assumption that the effect of n-Ach on the relationship of the two variables is based on prerequisite of the challenging nature of job. Logically, though possess a high n-Ach and allocate full effort on his/her job, a subject cannot become a good performer if the job environment is not conducive and challenging. In this case, characteristic of job such as autonomy or certain level of authority and responsibility take a prominent role for the existence of high level of performance and satisfaction. Different kind of job need or have different level of autonomy chance which leads to different level of performance and satisfaction. Prottas (2011) for example, found that employers and non-employers reported significantly greater autonomy opportunity than employees. In addition, non-employers had greater need of autonomy rather than employees and employers. Moreover, Steers strengthen my understanding that individual can also give a high valence to other than intrinsic or extrinsic rewards that is by seeking the more manifest needs.

Critique

Although Steers' study can be included into "classic" article concerning preliminary study of job attitude-job behavior relationship in which seems to make intuitive sense to the readers that it has worthwhile contribution to practical and theoretical building, the study is problematic for a number of reasons. The following concerns and critical points about the study are examined.

Operational and Measurement of Variables

This study suffers from disobedience of operational and tends to adopt simplistic measurement of the variables under investigation. As pointed out by Cooper and Schindler (2003:46); and Neuman (2000:162), operational definition take an important position in a study since it provide an understanding and measurement of variable and almost always used to develop the relationship found in hypothesis and theories. Based on this statement it is clear that operational is necessary for each variable. If operational procedures are adequately reported, one can identify the definitions and assess their appropriateness to research questioned posed (Scwab & Cumming, 1970). In Steer's study, the operational definition of the four main and demographic variables was not touched at all on the problem.

First, he did not specifically explain operational definition of job involvement. Whereas general agreement exist that involvement varies by individual and that it is somehow related to "important and interest", there is by no means any agreement exactly what involvement is, its bound, and in general a thorough conceptualization of the concept (Antil, 1984). Additionally, Antil states that several studies never defined specifically what they mean by involvement and simply used the term and assume the reader understand the concept. In spite of this statement, before determining measurement of the variable, it is become a must that involvement defined operationally. Different researcher tends to implement different operational definitions of involvement because it will be depended much on the study setting. Futrell (1977), for instance, defined job involvement as the degree to which the job is central to the person and his identity.

Second, the data of job performance in this study were collected from subject's immediate supervisors in which they asked to rate subjects compared to their peers. On one side, this technique is appropriate because by comparing the score of the subjects with their peer's scores, it will be little chance for the rater to inflate or deflate their subordinate's performance rating. There is a growing body of evidence supporting the view that supervisors are often motivated to use rating inflation as a strategy to manipulate subordinate's reaction the performance appraisals they receive (Fried et al 1999). The writers continues the explanation by proposing that high negative affectivity supervisors, relative to low negative-affectivity supervisors, will tend frequently inflate performance rating of their subordinates for political reasons. On the other side, Steers does not give any justification why the rater was not allowed to discuss their ratings with ratee or other employee. This can weaken the advantage of comparing the subject's score with their peer's mentioned above. Without feeding back the assessment result, there is a tendency that the raters do not assess objectively. It might be lies on practical consideration, because feedback session usually takes a relative long duration. However, we do not know the underlying reason precisely why it not stated explicitly by Steers.

Similar to the problem of the first main variable, operational definition of performance is also not stated in this study. It is important to define performance operationally because the relation between performance and other variable is depend much on the operational of performance itself. Performance which is defined by the diverse set of behaviors or activities individuals engaged are judged as important for accomplishing the goals of the organization can be categorized into wide

performance and specific performance (Olson and Borman, 1989). Accordingly, the writers defined individual's job performance as a function primarily of knowledge, skills, abilities, and other personality characteristic that may contribute to or detract from effective functioning on the job.

Third, the examination of job satisfaction and performance in Steers's study neglects operational definition of job satisfaction either. According to Schwab and Cumming (1970), the greatest ambiguity in theorizing and investigating about satisfaction-performance linkages has been in identifying satisfaction. This is due to following uncleanness of defining job satisfaction, 1) whether satisfaction is being used in a narrow need deprivation sense, or in a broad attitudinal sense, 2) which attitudinal referent are being considered, and 3) whether feeling of job satisfaction are generated with or without reference to conditions on other jobs.

In most organizational behavior research, an individual's job satisfaction is operationalized as individual's score across several items comprising a job satisfaction scale or as score for multiple facets of satisfaction (Schleicher et al 2004). Taking into consideration that job variety and autonomy is placed as important cues in examining the effect of n-Ach on job performance-job attitude relationship, actually Steers can cite or implement operational definition used by other researchers. For example, Schwab and Cumming (1970) define job satisfaction as affective respond of individual about an object or referent in his/her work environment which is dependent on five sub components i.e. work, pay, promotion, supervision, and coworker. Although the study done after Steers's, Futsell (1977), defined satisfaction as the degree to which a person's job actually provides the autonomy and growth experiences he feels it should.

Fourth, this study weakness is visible from the uncritical adoption of Gough and Heilbrun's (1965) adjective check list. Besides that, I find n-Ach is also problematic for uncleanness of its measurement. As stated by Barret (2005) which quotes McGrath (2005) statement, one of the basic requirements of science is accurate measurement. Need for achievement is an important ingredient of managerial or entrepreneurial success (Fuad and Bohari, 2011). In their study, by using four dimensions of n-Ach: the work ethic, the pursuit of excellence, mastery, and dominance, Fuad and Bohari found that there was a significant positive relationship between entrepreneurial success and the four dimensions. However, despite its appeal there are several problems associated with n-Ach measurement (Fineman, 1975).

In measuring n-Ach, Steers using Gough and Heilbrun's (1965) adjective check list only because it appeared to have reasonable validity and reliability data in support of its use. This could lead to serious problem since Steers did not establish validity and reliability test for the data collected. This process must be done first before the data were analyzed because there is a possibility that the present study setting is much different to that of Gough and Heilbrun's (1965). Although Gough, 1960, (in Welsh, 1975), argues that the adjective check list is an uncomplicated and straight forward assessment technique that seems to have lived up to its author's original hope that it would be both practical and versatile in application, it must be used with caution.

It is found that the use of objective tests questionnaires and adjective check list in examining n-Ach could be problematic (Hansemark, 1997). On one side, they

are objective in the sense that determination of points is done in advance with an elaborated guide and is not dependent on the interpretation of a person. For questionnaires, using closed question in particular, respondent asked to choose one of available answer which is the most suitable to his/her opinion, perception, or expectation. Adjective check list, on the other side, is a kind of booklet given to subject for circling the number which he/she feel best reflects the degree of adjective illustrated. It can also be carried out by providing statement for subject and ask them to choose between several response alternative which vary across item (Strack, 1992). Adjective check list is developed as self-descriptive for a standardized and readily available personality instrument which is consist of a list of several adjectives which have been found to reflect different aspects of individual's personality (Formyduval et al 1995; Schaefer, 1976).

Halsemark (1997) points out, the two kind of instruments most problematic for examining n-Ach due to several reasons i.e. 1) question could be biased as subject make their choices about what could be seen as socially acceptable, to create an ideological picture of themselves, 2) the subject could also have difficulties in deciding because they are too specific or without nuances, and 3) the questions will also be fixed in predetermined areas, which will limit the information they can give. Based on these arguments, projective test is posited to be better than objective test to measure n-Ach because the subject under investigation gives their expression of standardized and unstructured material. This is become important because achievement motive as it is defined in the theory of McClelland is not identical with our common idea about achievement as high income or a high test score, but as a process of planning and behavior in striving for excellence.

In projective test, subjects are asked to use their imagination to write stories on pictures provided (usually six or more) with several assisting question such as what is happening, who are the person, what is being thought, what will happen, and what will they do. By using experimenter judgment and expert judgment about analysis of phenomenon in the stories, knowledge about the individual's operant behavior based on the presence of an achievement image is obtained. It is visible that the role of observer/experimenter and expert is prominent in the process of coding. As noted by Blankenship et al (2006), it is admitted that in measurement of n-Ach by using projective test, the role of coder is very important as a factor of measurement. In sum, projective test is superior rather than objective test measuring n-Ach due to it digging deep the creative ability of the subject.

Steers asserts that he used Gough and Heilbrun's (1965) adjective check list, yet he did not mention what aspects were covered in measuring n-Ach of the subject under investigation. This is because he does not define n-Ach operationally. Consideration about aspects covered become crucial since there is a worrying aspect in which many of the existing n-Ach measures tend to be unrelated to each other (Weisntein, 1969 in Fineman, 1975). There are many sets of aspect available to be used by researcher in measuring n Ach (Abdel-Halim, 1980; Connor, 2001; Fineman, 1975; and Markku 1994). Fineman, for instance, has noted nine aspects of n-Ach i.e. individual responsibility, risk-taking, achievement satisfaction, task activity, task variety, need for affiliation, competitiveness, incentive value for free time, and researching the environment, whereas Markku (1994) suggests that n-Ach can be measured based on personal responsibility in performing a task, tendency to

set difficult goals, and desire for performance feedback. According to Abdel-Halim (1980), n-Ach is defined in term of which the individuals values the importance of outcome level, which items contained of personal growth and development; a feeling of self fulfillment in terms of the use one's unique capabilities and realizing one's potentialities; a feeling of worthwhile accomplishment and challenge; and a feeling of independent thought and action.

Last of all, Steers also analyzes and discusses the relationship between demographic data and the four main variables, but there is no explanation about each operational. It is not clear for educational background, for instance, whether it represent the subject's educational level or their average years of schooling. Additionally, he does not give any justification of age, job tenure, company tenure and age of the subjects as he did not provide results of empirical study and conceptual background about the association between these demographic variables and job attitude and job behavior in organization.

Determination of Population and Sampling Method

In this study, sampling method utilized is not stated. It is not surprising since Steers does not give any description about the population of his study. The choice of the sample (female first level supervisor) seems to be coincidence. The readers do not have any idea whether in the institution under study, first level supervisors are all female, or they were chosen intentionally. Since several researches show that there were differences between female and male related to performance, satisfaction, and n-Ach (Mason, 2001; Savery, 1996; Sinangil and Ones, 2003; and Sousa-Poza & Sousa Poza, 2003), ideally the present study takes both female and male sample. Sousa-Poza and Sousa-Poza (2003) for example, found that despite controlling for a number of factors, job satisfaction is significantly higher for female rather than male. Most probably, this is due to the fact that female employee have lower expectation about their job in comparison with their male employee counterparts. Purwanto (2003), also found that stronger positive job satisfaction is evidence for female (salesperson) due to in general, female might have more limited opportunities for mobility in comparison with their male counterparts. In contrast, the study finding of Savery (1996) shows that women are less likely to be satisfied with their job than man due to the lack of challenge in women's job so they had fewer job requiring substantial discretion or decision making.

The determination of the sample in this study is appropriate because the challenging nature of job environment become a prerequisite. Steers is right for choosing subject at the first level supervisor because it is determined that this kind of job contained a good deal of variety and autonomy and called for a relatively high degree of technical and conceptual ability. As pointed out by Fineman (1975), n-Ach people will enter more deeply into conceptual problems which require insightful solution in their job.

Choice of Variables

This study relies on previous findings done by other researchers who take into consideration individual differences and work environment characteristics in any examination relating performance and job satisfaction. They demonstrate that variables such as employee need strength, reward level, amount of pressure for

production in the work environment, and variation in the job, represent important moderators of the performance-satisfaction relationship. Although these findings indicate that individual disposition and work environment aspect may be acted as potential variables affecting job performance-job satisfaction relationship, variables included in the study must be chosen carefully. Steers seems to be careless in this matter. In the explanation of the model he discuss about individual intrinsic motivation in completing the task, yet in the implementation of the study he only take two attitude variables into consideration, namely job involvement and job satisfaction. In fact, intrinsic motivation is also included in the attitude, as pointed out by Futrell (1977), and become important variable affecting job performance. The researcher suggests that intrinsic motivation refers to the degree that higher-order need satisfaction is derived from completing the task. The implication of disobedience of this variable is that the result may be biased because the feeling of accomplishment, the feeling of personal growth, and the feeling of self esteem, which are become representatives of intrinsic motivation, were uncovered.

Statement of Problem, Limitation of Study, and Conclusion

Although the relationship of the problem to previous researches is made clear, in Steers's study, the problem is not stated explicitly. According to Cooper and Schindler (2003:101), management problem is generally become the basic of the problem statement and in a research/study problem statement contains the need for research project. Thus, statement of problem takes a prominent role in one study because it becomes a directive of conformity between the findings and the research question.

In the last paragraph of his article Steers indicates clearly that there are other important variables in the organizational milieu which have potential effect on job attitude-job performance relationship. This condition is reflected by the finding that the relationship of both attitudes was not overly large though significant. However, he does not make a statement about the limitation of his study for we know that there is no perfect research. He makes a suggestion for future research just based on his guess, not based on explicit statement about the limitation of his study:

It is the task of future research to take a more eclectic approach.....Thus, while progress has been made in research on this important linkage, we are still in need of considerably more information before meaningful applications of such knowledge can be made in organizational settings with any strong probability of success (p. 682).

The last critical point which is visible in Steers article is that the conclusion has not been addressed at all. Since conclusion is a brief statement of the essential findings, it is the researcher task to inform on the variables that critically influence the results of the study. Although sometimes a researcher reluctant to make conclusions and leaves the task to the reader (Cooper and Schindler, 2003:665), in my point of view it will be much better if the conclusion is included for giving clearer knowledge and comprehension to the reader about the study findings.

Concluding Remarks

The study done by Steers (1975) has provided preliminary insight concerning potential effect of individual differences on job performance-job attitude relationship. I found the study has some critical problems which may stimulate debate among behavioral science researchers. Additionally, I thought that his work is very modest not only shown by the number of pages and the superficial of the discussion, but also by simplicity of its research method. However, Steers had achieved the goal laid out in the beginning, and his consideration of valence and instrumentality in discussing relationship between job satisfaction and job performance deserve our further attentions.

I definitely agree with him related to the role of work environment challenging nature as a prerequisite of the task accomplishment of individual in organization. Inasmuch work environment variables were not taken into consideration; he put a great expectation to the following researchers for examining such variables in their studies. As many researchers have finally investigate work environment as potential variable affecting job performance-job satisfaction relationship, it seems that the expectation has fulfilled and it means that the current study is used as guidance by other researchers. Finally, I reckon, despite its weaknesses, this article has given valuable contribution to behavioral science research in organization since it considers the role of valence and instrumentality in examining performance-job attitude relationship.

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