

Impact Analysis of Job Involvement of Employees in the Work Environment: Approaches and Dimensions

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ABSTRACT

It is obvious that man must work to ensure his survival on earth. As a result, the modern world produces employees who are either given fully to their work or those who do not take their work serious. Evolving from the studies of psychologists, and focusing on the analysis of the motivational states of an employee in the work environment, job involvement (JI) describes the attitudes, feelings, and beliefs an employee holds regarding the job situation. In fact, it describes a situation where a worker is absorbed in his/her work; where he/she recognizes his/her work as paramount and gives in his/her best to the work. This study presents a review of job involvement, its approaches and dimensions, measures of JI, theories, determinants and consequences, among other things. Psychological identification with work and the importance of work productivity or efficiency to individual self-esteem are the two dimensions that constitute the main theoretical conceptualizations of job involvement. Conclusively, this work submits that the tendency to experience low job involvement will be higher for those who experience disconfirmation of expectations and lower for those whose expectations are met even when the context of the work remains constant.

Keywords: *Workplace, job involvement, work environment, motivational states*

INTRODUCTION

Work organizations are consciously created to provide certain goods and services for human consumption and societal benefits. Most organizations' ultimate concern is to make profits and also compete favourably with others in a globally competitive world. As a result, many organizations tend to focus extensively on the impact of workers on their organizations rather than the impact of workplace

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on their workers. Resultantly, workers become alienated and manifest other negative work attitudes and behaviours, including low job involvement, turnover intentions and absenteeism, among others. Job involvement is a crucial work attitude or behaviour (Fromm, 1955; Podsakoff, Williams and Todor, 1986; Ahiauzu, 1992;). Importantly, job involvement is often seen as one of the forces or factors driving the overall performance of any organization. Industrial or work sociologists systematically study the reality and problems of industrial or work organizations, the interaction of people in industrial settings and work organizations (social organization of work), and the outcomes of such interaction as industrial pressures and processes shaping workers' attitudes, behaviours, and entire life in modern times (Parker, Brown, Chold and Smith, 1972; Pascal 1972). Work attitudes and behaviours, which are products of industrial processes, include alienation, job involvement, job satisfaction, job commitment, workaholism, absenteeism, and turnover, among others. The study of these work attitudes and behaviours is of utmost importance to industrial or work sociology. Thus, this study presents a literature review of job involvement (JI) in order for scholars, employers and employees to adequately understand the concept; its approaches/dimensions; measures of JI; its theories; and its antecedents, determinants and consequences, among other things.

Concept of Job Involvement

According to Hirschfeld and Field (2000), job involvement refers to how people perceive their jobs in relation to the work environment, the job itself, and how their work and life are integrated. The underlying argument is that one is either psychologically absorbed in one's job or psychologically detached from the job, and that a job must satisfy the needs of an individual worker in order to make the worker involved in such job. Emphasis is thus placed on the need-satisfying aspects of the job as basic requirements for job involvement.

Kanungo (1982) defined job involvement as a term which describes an individual's beliefs about one's present job, a function of the satisfaction of the individual's present needs (Ho, 2006). Lodahl and Kejner (1965) defined JI as the internalization of values about the goodness of work or the importance of work in the worth or total self-image of the individual. This internalization of work values is indicative of an employee's psychological identification with work, which may be an outcome of an employee's early socialization process during which the individual may internalized the values about the goodness of work. As an individual's internalization of values about the work or the importance of

work, job involvement may appraise the ease with which an employee can be further socialised by an organisation. Organisational socialisation is the process by which an individual understands the values, abilities, behaviours, and social knowledge indispensable for an organizational role and for taking part in as a member (Ramsey, Lassk and Marshall, 1995; Behn, 1998). Job involvement is a belief about one's current job and is a function of how much the job can satisfy one's wishes or needs. Individuals who display high involvement in their jobs consider their work to be a very important part of their lives and whether or not they feel good about themselves is closely related to how they perform on their jobs. In other words, for highly involved individuals performing well on the job is important for their self esteem.

Kanungo (1982) defined job involvement as an individual's psychological identification with or commitment to his/her job, and further submitted that job-involved people genuinely care for and are concerned about their work. Employees' psychological identification with a specific job depends on the extent of their needs and their perceptions of the potential of the job to satisfy them (Emery and Barker, 2007). The adoption of Kanungo's definition in this study is informed by the fact that Kanungo (1979, 1982) develops a motivational approach that integrates the different approaches to job involvement, including both psychological and sociological factors, using the basic concept that job involvement is affected by the potential for socialization, experience and the likelihood that the work environment can satisfy workers needs or demand.

Consequently, job involvement depends on employees' needs (both extrinsic and intrinsic), as well as their perceptions of the job's potential to satisfy those needs. Based on this, Moorhead and Griffin (1995) averred that job involvement is simply the extent to which individuals tend to exceed the normal expectations associated with their jobs, meaning that JI is a function of the extent to which the job can satisfy the individual's current needs. Thus, worker expectations are an important factor in job involvement. In addition, job involvement explains the processes involved with which an employee can be more orientated about an organization. Rabinowitz and Hall (1977) suggest that job involvement is a "feedback variable", simultaneously a cause and an effect of job behaviour. Research into job involvement as a cause has focused primarily on job performance, employee turnover and absenteeism as dependent variables. Numerous studies investigating a possible relationship between job involvement and performance have produced disappointing results. A job-involved person is one whose work situation is an integral and important part of his life. Such

identification with work is structured by the experience of job conditions as permitting the satisfaction of important needs (Mgbe, 1994). People are said to be involved in their jobs where they are highly motivated, where they feel a sense of solidarity with the enterprise and where they feel a sense of pride from their work (Eze, 1995). Job involvement is the opposite of worker alienation (Argyris, 1964; Kanungo, 1979, 1982) and threat of job insecurity (Greenhalgh and Rosenblatt, 1984). The latter means that the highly involved employees are likely to react more negatively than lowly-involved employees, if they perceive the threat of job insecurity. Having low involvement contributes to employees' feelings of alienation of purpose, alienation in the organisation or feeling of separation between what the employees see as their "life" and the job they do (Toga, 2011). It therefore becomes natural to expect that once job alienation is high, job involvement will be low; and *vice versa*. This is the central thesis of this present study. Therefore, this study hypothesizes that people who are highly involved in their jobs will feel less alienated.

Approaches and Dimensions of Job Involvement

There are two main approaches to the study of job involvement: individual difference and job characteristics. The first approach views JI as occurring when the possession of certain needs, values or personal characteristics predispose employees to become more or less involved in their jobs. The second approach views job involvement as a response to specific work situation characteristics (management's policies), meaning that certain types of jobs or work situation characteristics influence the degree to which an individual becomes involved in his/her job (Munene and Azuka, 1991; Denhardt R. and Denhardt J., 2000; Chungtai, 2008; Liao and Lee, 2009). Individual characteristics such as age, education, sex, tenure, need strength, level of control and values were linked to job involvement (Rabinowitz and Hall, 1977).

Certain types of jobs or characteristics of the work situation influence the degree to which an individual becomes alienated and involved in his/her job. In summary, job involvement is a function of individual differences and the work situations and can be influenced by sociodemographic and psychological variables (Aderibigbe, Igboanusi and Gwaison, 2014). Thus, demographic and work experience variables are expected to relate to job involvement. Positive relationships are expected with age, tenure, years in occupation, education, having children and gender. However, there is no evidence of a strong relationship between job involvement and performance (Cohen, 1999).

Scholars have identified several dimensions of job involvement. Lodahl and Kejner (1965) believed that there are four sub-dimensions that are important to job involvement: response to work, expressions of being job-involved, sense of duty towards work, and feelings about unfinished work and absenteeism. This means that employees' response to work is determined by the extent to which expectations about work are met; employees express thinking constantly about the job even when they are not at work; employees who are highly job involved have a great sense of duty towards work, such as being willing to work overtime without pay in order to complete an assigned task; and job-involved employees avoid being absent from work and feel guilty about unfinished work (Lodahl and Kejner, 1965). Also, Iqbal, Anwar and Qasem (2013) categorised job involvement into four diverse dimensions: work as a central life interest, active participation in the job, performance as central to self-esteem, and performance compatible with self-concept. In work as central life interest, job involvement is thought of as the degree to which a person regards the work situation as important and as central to his/her identity because of the opportunity to satisfy main needs.

Saleh and Hosek (1976) cited in Kanungo (1979) argued that job involvement is a complex concept based on three dimensions: cognition (the extent to which the individual identifies with the job), action (the extent to which the individual actively participates in the job), and feeling (the extent to which the individual considers job performance important to personal self-worth). Similarly, Yoshimura (1996) presents a multidimensional model of job involvement. The model suggests that job involvement is not a one-dimensional concept, but consists of three dimensions: emotional, cognitive, and behavioural. Emotional job involvement which indicates how strongly the worker is interested in his/her job or how much the worker likes his/her job, as well as the degree of attachment to the job; cognitive job involvement which also implies how strongly the worker wants to participate in his/her job related decision making or how important the job is to his/her whole life, the psychological states, self-esteem and active participation; and behavioural job involvement which indicates how often the worker usually takes extra-role behaviour and voluntary learning, such as, taking an evening class to enhance job-related skills or thinking about the job after leaving the office. Yoshimura further classifies the antecedents of job involvement into three categories namely: individual personality variables, organizational variables and person-social variables or non-organizational variables. Interestingly, this model has helped us to understand how job involvement has evolved and how the concept has changed over the time.

Measures of Job Involvement: Emphasising on Kanungo's Scale

Job involvement represents the extent to which someone identifies psychologically with one's work (Brown, 1996). Job involvement scale (JIS) was measured with Kanungo's (1982) 10-item Job Involvement Questionnaire (JIQ). Measured on a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree), some sample items for Kanungo's JIQ include: "The most important things that happen to me involve my present job" and "I live, eat, and breathe my job".

Although there are other scales advanced by other scholars for measuring job involvement, Kanungo's JIQ scale has been called "the clearest and most precise conceptualization of job involvement" (Brown, 1996). It has shown an inter-item consistency ranging from .74 to .90 (Blau, 1985); discriminant validity against related constructs (Blau, 1985, 1986; Blau and Boal, 1987) and convergent validity with the Lodahl and Kejner (1965) scale and pictorial and semantic-differential measures (Kanungo, 1982). Kanungo's JIQ scale has a uni-dimensional variable yielding a Cronbach Alpha coefficient of 0.81 and has reasonably high levels of internal consistency, test-retest reliability and validity. Test-retest coefficients of respectively 0.74, 0.85 and 0.82 and both convergent and discriminant validity are reported (Kanungo 1982). The Principal Factor Analysis carried out in the present study indicated a one-factor solution with the scale having a Cronbach Alpha coefficient of 0.88 (Van Wyk, 1998). Thus, we assume that the Kanungo's JIQ is valid and reliable.

Determinants and Consequences of Job Involvement

Numerous possible antecedents and/or determinants of job involvement have been examined, but the construct remains largely unexplained. Job involvement seems to be determined by individuals' characteristics (that is, that some people have a predisposition to be more involved in their jobs whatever the circumstances) (Morrow, 1993; Rabinowitz and Hall, 1977). Situational variables shown to be related to job involvement include challenging work (Hall, Goodale, Rabinowitz and Morgan, 1978), a confident and trusting leader, participation in decision making, social contact and job satisfaction (Rabinowitz and Hall, 1977), freedom of choice in career decisions (O'Reilly III and Caldwell, 1980), autonomy (Lorence and Mortimer, 1985) and pressure for quality work (Lawler and Hall, 1970). Furthermore, an interaction between individual differences and situational characteristics has been shown to influence job involvement (Kanungo, 1982). Rabinowitz, Hall and Goodale (1977) posit that personal and environmental variables are equally important. Though, McKelvey and Sekaran (1977) consider

personal attributes more relevant, Newton and Keenan (1983) indicate that environmental variables can better predict job involvement. Thus, it appears that both personal attributes and work environment factors can explain job involvement. In this sense, when examining and explaining the relationships between job involvement and other key variables, the psychological identification dimension may hold the most interest. Reitz and Jewell (1979) say that job involvement is linked to importance of work in individual's routine or daily life. This implies if one gives importance to his work certainly he is loyal to his work as well as to the organization. This will also affect the performance of the individual. In addition, Gurin, Veroff and Feld (1960) also cite involvement as the extent to which performance have an effect on one's self-esteem. Job factors can influence the involvement level of an individual in his job (Vroom, 1962). In this regard, Lawler and Hall (1970) propose that most practical sight of job involvement might be role of job and individual relationship. Both individual's own personality and variables influenced by different situations can change the level of job involvement (Rabinowitz and Hall, 1977).

The employees whose involvement in job is high can be said that the job is important to individual's self-image (Kanungo, 1982). Job involvement is very low among part time employees. Martin and Hafer (1995) show that job involvement in full time employees are higher than the part time or contractual employees. Job involvement has major impact on productivity and efficiency of employee and work has vital role in increasing job involvement of individual if it plays significant role in the life of employee (Probst and Tahira, 2000).

Lawler (1986) sees job involvement as significant key factor for creating and increasing motivation of employees in view of organization and motivation play important role in productivity and performance of individual. Researches over the past two decades, which explored the constructs of job involvement have approached it from two different perspectives (Sekeran, 1989; Sekeran and Mowday, 1981). First when viewed as an individual difference variable, job involvement is believed to occur when the possession of certain needs, values or personal characteristics predispose individuals to become more or less involved in their jobs. The second perspective views job involvement as a response to specific work situation characteristics. In other words, certain types of jobs or characteristics of the work situation influence the degree to which an individual becomes involved in his/her job. Brown (1996) demonstrates that job involvement has been related to job characteristics such as task autonomy, task significance, task identity, skill variety and feedback and supervisory behaviours such as leader

consideration, participative decision making and amount of communication. Hackman and Oldham (1976, 1980) propose in their Job Characteristics Model (JCM) that features of a job can affect the job involvement because these features may encourage the internal motivation of employees. In other words, goodness and significance of work play important role in the worth of employee due to internalization of value through job involvement (Lodahl and Kejner, 1965). Lawler (1992) and Pfeffer (1994) also argue that through job design, job involvement could be increased. Employees with significantly high job involvement consider and recognize that their job play an important role in their routine lives (Sonnetag and Krueger, 2006), meaning that job is more important for their lives than anything else.

Individuals or employees may be involved in their job even in the temporarily and non-natural situation of laboratory (Lewis, 1944; Lewis and Franklin, 1944). This clearly indicates the role of work and job design in enhancing job involvement. It is also clear that employees with high job involvement are more self-determining and self-assured (Wood, 1974). Job involvement can be linked to decision-making and decision to produce (March and Simon, 1958). Job involvement is a function of individual differences and the work situations. Thus demographic and work experience variables are expected to relate to job involvement. Positive relationships are expected with age, tenure, years in occupation, education, child bearing, and gender. Job involvement is negatively associated with intentions to quit and positively related to job satisfaction and organizational climate perceptions (McElroy, Morrow and Wardlow, 1999).

Fostering job involvement is an important organisational objective because many researchers consider it to be a primary determinant of organisational effectiveness (Pfeffer, 1994) and individual motivation (Hackman and Lawler, 1971). These links stem from the theoretical notion that being immersed in one's work increases motivational processes which in turn influence job performance and other relevant outcomes like turnover and absenteeism (Diefendorff, Brown, Kamin, and Lord, 2002). Brown (1996) contends that "increasing job involvement can enhance organizational effectiveness and productivity by engaging employees more completely in their work and making work a more meaningful and fulfilling experience". Therefore, management should understand the importance of job involvement because it is most important and essential component of work behavior among the workforce (Manojlovich, Laschinger, and Heather, 2002; Soong, 2000). This study assumes that giving employees power over their work process and products can motivate the employees to enhance their job

involvement. Another possible consequence of a low job involvement is turnover or turnover intentions. Turnover intentions are the cognitive process of thinking, planning, and desiring to leave a job (Mobley, Griffeth, Hand and Meglino, 1979). *Turnover intention* is defined as ‘a conscious and deliberate willfulness to leave the organization’ (Tett and Meyer, 1993). Work behaviours and attitudes such as OCB and work alienation can be theoretically linked to withdrawal behaviours and the turnover process (Shepard, 1972; Ravichandran and Gilmore, 2007) and the position work engagement and burnout hold in the sequence leading up to turnover could help define the turnover process more comprehensively. Turnover intentions generally occur before actual turnover; moreover, turnover intentions are generally the best predictor of voluntary turnover (Steel and Ovalle, 1984). Losing successful and highly technical skilled employees may have negative consequences for an organization. Turnover is likely to cause new and additional costs such as the costs of hiring and training of new staff (Dailey and Kirk, 1992). For instance, Fang (2001) observes that nurse turnover causes high administration costs, interrupts hospital functioning and decreases service quality.

Furthermore, doctors and nurses comprise of the majority of a hospital’s staff and they have high training costs (Ding and Lin, 2006). A possible solution has been offered by Martin and Bennett (1996) who state that managers can obtain a committed workforce through creation and maintenance of a procedurally fair organizational climate. In this case, alienating factors should be reduced minimally or (if possible) removed totally from the workplace. Robert (1997) found that labour turnover is positively related to job dissatisfaction and is costly to an organisation. Such costs include that of recruitment, training of new employees, high scrap and waste rates as well as high accident costs for new employees. Job dissatisfaction manifests itself in the form of labour turnover in several organisations; hence, it is likely to have negative implications for organisational commitment, a factor identified as critical to organisational success. According to Werner (2007), only satisfied employees seem more likely to display positive behaviour that contributes to the overall functioning of the organisation. In this regard, management in organisations must be more concerned with the extent to which their employees experience job satisfaction and are involved in their jobs. Organ, Podsakoff and McKenzie (2005) state that “the ability of an organisation to innovate and successfully implement business strategy and to achieve competitive advantage depends on how much employees are involved in their jobs and are satisfied in doing their jobs”.

Theoretical Undercurrents

A number of motivation or organisational theories, including Adam's equity and Gurr's relative deprivation theories are used to explain job involvement. The equity theory is built upon the argument that a man's output or rewards in exchange with others should be proportional to his investments or inputs (Oliver and Swan, 1989). As popularized by Adams (1964), equity theory focuses on social comparisons in the workplace and employees' reaction to incentives and outcomes in work settings. The theory assumes that satisfaction exists when consumers or workers perceive their output/input ratio as being fair (Adams, 1964). It refers to the individual's subjective judgments about the equity or fairness of the reward they get in relationship to the inputs in comparison with others (Nwigbo, 2001; Athiyaman, 2004). Based on Adams' equity theory, the feeling of alienation and low job involvement are tied to perceived inequity or workers' observation that their counterparts in the same or other work organizations are paid or motivated higher than them.

Similar to Adam's equity theory, the Relative Deprivation Theory (RDT) suggests that those who receive what they feel they deserve feel satisfied, while those who receive less feel anger and deprivation. The RDT was articulated by Gurr (1980) in "Why Men Rebel", following Dollard and associates' postulation in 1939 that frustration leads men to act aggressively. Gurr defines relative deprivation as the perception by actors of the discrepancy between their value expectations and their value capabilities. Value expectations are goods and conditions of life to which people believe they are rightfully entitled, while value capabilities are the goods and conditions they think they are capable of getting and keeping. Based on Gurr's theory, this present study argues that workers whose needs have been met or who receive what they want in their workplaces feel happy, satisfied and involved; while those whose needs have not been met or who do not receive what they want in their workplaces feel unhappy, frustrated, dissatisfied or alienated, and less involved in their jobs. It can be hypothesized that alienation is caused by relative deprivation, and the resulting low job involvement and turnover intentions are its manifestations.

Naik (1978) has observed that female employees exhibit greater alienation than their male counterparts. Vijayanthimala and Bharati (1997) show that the mean alienation scores for women studied were higher because of their lower job involvement and a configuration that included parenthood more predominantly as compared to employment. A study of New Zealand police officers found no difference in level of job involvement between male and female respondents

(Love and Singer, 1988). Using a sample size of 500 workers, Singh and Pestonjee (1990) explore the effect of job involvement and sense of participation on job satisfaction of bank employees and found that job satisfaction was affected positively by occupational level, job involvement and participation. In fact, the interactional effect of job involvement and participation was found to be significant. Mishra and Gupta (1995) investigate the predicting effect of motivation, alienation and job involvement on performance of blue collar industrial workers. The result showed that both motivation and alienation emerged as significant predictors of work performance but motivation was found to be the stronger predictor of performance. Mishra and Shyam (2005) conduct a study to find out the relationship of social support and job involvement among 200 prison officers. The results show a significant positive relationship between the two variables. Allam (2007) conducts a study on bank employees and observes that personal accomplishment, one of the facets of job burnout, is found significant related to job involvement among the bank managers.

Chiaburu, Thundiyil and Wang (2014) provide a meta-analysis of alienation, outlining the extent to which it is predicted by individual differences (need for achievement), role stressors (role conflict), leader dimensions (initiating structure), and aspects of the work context (formalisation). They also examined the relationship of alienation with outcomes such as employee attitudes (job satisfaction), performance (task performance), withdrawal (absenteeism), and side effects (drinking). Examining these relationships based on data from 45 primary studies and 227 statistically independent relationships, their meta-analysis provides cumulative evidence for effect sizes across multiple settings and respondents, clarifies ambiguous aspects of the construct, and presents more information on the extent to which alienation can be seen as the opposite of job involvement. The study established that alienation negatively predict job involvement, job satisfaction, organisational identification, and organisational commitment, but positively predict job insecurity. Job involvement is how people see their jobs as both a relationship with the working environment, the job itself and how their work and life are commingled or mixed. Having low job involvement contributes to employees' feelings of alienation of purpose, alienation in the organisation or feeling of separation between what the employees see as their "life" and the job they do. People who experience high alienation and low involvement in workplace usually have high intention to leave. Turnover intentions are the cognitive process of thinking, planning, and desiring to leave a job (Mobley, Griffeth, Hand and Meglino, 1979). Turnover intentions generally occur before

actual turnover; moreover, turnover intentions are generally the best predictor of voluntary turnover (Steel and Ovalle, 1984). According to Fishbein and Ajzen (1975), the best single predictor of an individual's behaviour will be a measure of his intention to perform that behaviour". From the literature so far reviewed, it is obvious that there is generally a dearth of empirical investigations of job involvement as a work process or attitude, especially in developing societies. This gap is really glaring and needs to be filled in this age.

CONCLUSION

Two dimensions (psychological identification with work and the importance of work productivity or efficiency to individual self-esteem) constitute the main theoretical conceptualization of job involvement used in several studies. Low job involvement has negative effect on organisational performance and productivity, including increased alienation, aggression amongst individuals and groups, employee burnout, low productivity, tendency to expend little energy, working for external or instrumental rewards (salary), turnover intentions or likelihood to quit the jobs, employee dissatisfaction, low worker commitment, absenteeism, employee sabotage and theft. Arising from the foregoing synthesis, it is obvious that workers expect: to be paid well in order to solve their personal needs, work in conducive environment, be fairly treated by management and co-workers, have control or autonomy and responsibility, be promoted as at when due, and encounter well-enriched jobs in order to have the opportunity of using their abilities and increasing their control and responsibility (Hackman and Oldham, 1976; Bakker and Demerouti, 2008; Raza and Nawaz, 2011). Expectedly, low job involvement results when these expectations are not met.

Furnham (2005) suggests that people are motivated to work due to their expectancies. Alternatively, when workers' expectations are disconfirmed in the workplace, poor work outcomes such as alienation (Korman, Wittig-Berman and Lang, 1981), low job involvement (Riipin, 1997), burnout (Fredenberger, 1980), disillusion (Sarason, 1977), and demotivation (Furnham, 2005) become the results. In particular, it is argued that employees are more involved in their jobs when their needs are fulfilled as a result of the congruence between job expectations and the job itself (Blauner, 1964; Finifter, 1972; Kanungo, 1979; Riipin, 1997). Against this backdrop, this paper submits that the tendency to experience low job involvement will be higher for those who experience disconfirmation of expectations and lower for those whose expectations are met even when the context of work remains constant.

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