



Title

How does Job Autonomy Influence Workplace Motivation?

Batchelor thesis

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Thesis Summary

Problem statement: To understand job autonomy's effect on various aspects of motivation, how this motivational effect translates to change in employee behavior and attitudes, and how employers can utilize this information.

Purpose: Motivation is multidimensional, although autonomy is commonly understood as motivating, I wish to provide a deeper understanding of why it motivates and the specific aspects it influences.

Method: Systematic literature review that included eight quantitative research articles. A large number of articles that fit the basic criteria were gathered, then a selection process was conducted based on their usefulness to answer my problem statement, the merit of the article and other qualifications I set. The selected articles filtered for findings regarding autonomy's relation to motivational aspects, and the whole of the articles were analyzed for a better understanding of the context of said findings.

Findings: My findings indicate that autonomy has a significant role in motivating employees. Granting employees autonomy in their place of work makes them experience a sense of empowerment and ownership, this fosters intrinsic motivation and proactive attitudes. Allowing employees to make autonomous decisions and control their work processes leads to greater engagement and dedication. Autonomy enables employees to align their work to complement their strengths, which enchants their sense of competence and accomplishment. Autonomy contributes to work satisfaction as it creates a deeper connection to the work

conducted through a greater sense of ownership. This in turn enhances intrinsic motivation driving employees to improve their work performance. Autonomy was also found to strengthen employee's emotional attachment to their work and organization, fostering identification and commitment. The freedom to make autonomous decisions makes employees feel more responsible for the outcomes of their work and a greater belief in their capabilities. This creates a sense of competence and responsibility which promotes prosocial motivation. To summarize, autonomy plays a significant role in motivating employees by empowering them, aligning their work with their strengths, enhancing work satisfaction, fostering emotional attachment, and promoting prosocial behavior.

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Goal

The original goal was to find direct connections between autonomy and motivation, but the articles I found in my search did not directly refer to motivation. What I instead found was differing terms referring to elements of motivation, or elements that may increase or decrease motivation. Understanding that work motivation is more complicated and multifaceted than initially thought, led me to reevaluate my goal with this thesis. I concluded that a better approach would be to examine various aspects of motivation as well as factors that may increase or decrease motivation. This broader approach would shift the focus of the thesis more towards how autonomy motivates, compared to the original intent of a focus on why autonomy motivates. But as it would grant a more comprehensive and useful overview of the subject, I deemed it a better approach.

1.2 The importance motivation

The knowledge of how to motivate your workforce being useful seems self-evident. Motivation is both commonly and academically understood to be beneficial for an organization's productivity. To have employees who are dedicated and enthusiastic about their work is desired by every leader and significant efforts are made to foster it. Although not every workplace or occupation has the possibility for any significant degree of job autonomy due to the nature of the work, where it can be granted it should be considered. Job

autonomy may include organizational difficulties and costs to enact as any systematic change might, but it is comparatively inexpensive compared to extrinsically motivating factors, such as pay-raises, bonuses, or benefits. Hence workplace motivation should be considered when looking at improving a workplace's motivation.

1.3 The importance of understanding autonomy

Any organizational change may have unforeseen consequences, the information on autonomy's effect on aspects of motivation is important when wishing to employ autonomy as a job resource. Knowing why and how autonomy influences motivation allows employers to develop motivational strategies more effectively. They can implement autonomy-supportive practices that align with the nature of their employee's motivation, which fit in their work environment, and are beneficial to the work conducted. It also allows leaders to construct supervisory guidelines and procedures that ensure supervisors and managers do not undermine employee's autonomy.

2.0 Definition of terms

In this part, definitions of important terms will be given, as their understanding is crucial to understand the following findings and elaborations in this thesis. The terms selected are the most important concepts for the purpose of answering this thesis research question.

2.1 Key terms

2.1.1 Job Autonomy

Job autonomy refers to having a level of freedom and independence in scheduling work and making decisions regarding the procedures and methods used to conduct work. Job autonomy is one of the five key job dimensions in Hackman and Oldham's job characteristics model that contribute towards experiencing responsibility for work outcomes. Job autonomy gives employees discretion and control over their work, limiting the dependence on supervision and instructions from supervisors or standardized job procedures. It allows employees to use their own judgment and make decisions that align with their preferences and skills. (Hackman & Oldham, 1976). Job autonomy is multidimensional, and in some studies and literature it is divided into the three dimensions of: work scheduling autonomy, work method autonomy and decision-making autonomy. However, the distinction between these dimensions is not present in most studies on the subject, regarding job autonomy instead as a singular concept. Therefore, job autonomy will mostly be discussed in this manner, with distinctions made when relevant.

2.1.2 Motivation

Motivation is defined by (Deci & Ryan, 2000) as "the energization and direction of behavior and the propensity to exert effort in the service of achieving goals." The article goes on to elaborate that motivation is the activation and direction of behavior and a willingness to invest effort to pursue and achieve goals. It also distinguishes intrinsic motivation from

extrinsic motivation, stating that intrinsic motivation is driven by internal factors while extrinsic motivation is driven by external rewards and consequences. This definition encapsulates what I will refer to when stating that something motivates.

2.2 Aspects of motivation

2.2.1 Work engagement

According to (Schaufeli et al., 2006) work engagement is defined as "A positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption." It is characterized by individuals having high levels of energy and resilience (vigor), a strong sense of significance and enthusiasm (dedication) and being absorbed and immersed in one's work (absorption). Work engagement refers to a positive, enjoyable, and fulfilling state of mind that creates a sense of enthusiasm and focus on one's work.

2.2.2 Affective commitment

Affective commitment refers to an employee's emotional attachment to the organization they are working for, which leads to an increased willingness to pursue the organization's goals (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Affective commitment is characterized by a willingness to exert more effort and endorsement of the values and goals of their organization. It can be observed in employees when they exhibit a sense of loyalty, belongingness, and positive emotional

connection to the organization. Employees who possess effective commitment will pursue company goals for its inherent satisfaction.

2.2.3 Job satisfaction

Job satisfaction refers to an individual's subjective evaluation of their overall experience and feelings towards their work. It includes what level of pleasure, contentment, and fulfillment one derives for their work, and how positive one's attitude is towards different aspects of one's work environment, such as job tasks, colleagues, supervisors, and the organization's policies (Judge & Kammeyer-Mueller, 2012).

2.2.4 Prosocial motivation

Prosocial motivation is a desire and inner drive to invest effort with the goal of benefiting other people. It includes both personality traits, such as agreeableness and empathy, as well as temporary moments of focusing on the wellbeing of others (Grant, 2008). People who are more prosocially motivated tend to act more kindly, show empathy and seek opportunities to be more helpful. They are intrinsically motivated to contribute to the happiness and wellbeing of others, even without any personal gain.

2.2.5 Harmonious passion

The terms harmonious passion and intrinsic motivation are similar enough for them not to be considered distinct aspects of motivation for the purpose of this thesis. But it's worth noting the small distinction that harmonious passion focuses more on the internalized love from doing an activity, compared to intrinsic motivation's focus on internal enjoyment and interest in an activity. Simply put, harmonious passion falls under the term intrinsic motivation, but with a greater focus the integration of an activity with a person's identity (Gao & Jiang, 2019).

3.0 Method

3.1 Literature search

In the search process for finding primary research studies the database Google Scholar was used. Its advanced search features helped finding articles with the specific characteristics and subjects I was looking for, and as it had a sufficient number of relevant articles available I found no need for using more scholarly databases. The search terms used were: "motivation", the exact phrase "job autonomy", and at least one of the phrases "hospitality industry" or "service industry".

These terms were identified through a process of trial and error, as various studies refer to motivating employees in specific ways using different terminology. To examine different

aspects of the motivational effects autonomy had on employees, only the term “motivation” was selected. This approach ensured that the focus was on motivation as a general concept, while still allowing for a broader range of articles to be included without excluding specific aspects of motivation. “Job autonomy” was found to give better results than “autonomy”, as it ensured that the topic was on autonomy in regards to how one fulfills one's workplace duties. The phrases “hospitality industry” or “service industry”, ensured that the articles found were related to the industry I wished to examine.

As the goal was to find the most relevant research, an emphasis on finding newer articles was set. My reasoning for this was that newer articles often build upon or challenge previous findings, so by focusing on recent articles one can stay up to date with the latest development and insights in the chosen field. Also older articles can become outdated to current issues due to societal context, due to changes in technology, politics and social norms. Due to this, I followed my counselor's advice and set a parameter for 10 years, only using articles from 2013 till 2023.

3.2 Filtration

After gathering a large number of relevant articles that fit the basic criteria of studying in some capacity the relationship between autonomy and motivation, using a quantitative research method, having a study population in the triple digits, and being published by a scholarly journal. I began the selection process to determine which articles would be included in the thesis. The most important aspect was what findings were found regarding the

relationship between autonomy and motivation, and how conclusive those findings were. Additionally, I took into consideration what motivational aspect the article investigated, as I aimed to gather a diverse range of studies in regard to the aspect of motivation. Allowing me to provide a more comprehensive overview of how autonomy affected various dimensions of motivation. Of less significance, I also considered geography and workplace setting from which the study population was drawn. This was considered as I wanted diversity in my selection of articles, so the findings were more representative of the service industry as a whole. Through this process, I narrowed down my selection to eight articles I deemed suitable for addressing my thesis research questions.

4.0 Findings

The research articles will be presented first with a chart, summarizing the purpose of the study, what method was used for data gathering and analysis, and a short overview of all key findings. Then there will be a summarization of the article's findings regarding the relation between autonomy and motivation. The two-part structure serves two purposes, firstly to provide an overview of the contextual background within which the selected findings were obtained, and secondly to offer more detailed elaboration on these selected findings.

4.1 Scientific articles

Article 1:	Motivating frontline employees: Role of job characteristics in work and life satisfaction
Journal:	Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management (2016)
Authors:	Xinyuan (Roy) Zhao, Richard Ghiselli, Rob Law, Jing Ma
Purpose:	The study aims to extend our knowledge on the effects that job characteristics have on enriching jobs and improving attitudes towards work and life, using the five core job dimensions from the job characteristics model.
Method:	The data was collected using a survey questionnaire, the participants were chosen at random from six full service upscale hotels frontline workers. 401 employees were included in the data analysis. Participants were asked to rate five job characteristics on a scale from one to seven, the results were used to calculate the Motivating Potential Score (MPS). Job stress, life satisfaction and job satisfaction was measured through a seven-point Likert-type scale where participants would agree or disagree with statements. The data then was analyzed with the two-step approach of structural equation modeling.
Results:	Autonomy, task identity, and task significance were found to reduce job stress, while feedback increased job satisfaction. Skill variety had a negative association with job satisfaction and a positive association with job stress. MPS has a positive relationship with job satisfaction and a negative relationship with job stress.
Database:	Google scholar

This study measured the five core job dimensions to find the composite score of MPS, a measurement for indicating the potential for intrinsic motivation for a job. Among these characteristics autonomy had the strongest correlation to the MPS score, indicating that higher levels of autonomy in a job is associated with higher motivational potential. Three hypotheses were made in regard to autonomy’s effect on employees work experience, H1d “Autonomy positively affects job satisfaction”, H2d “Autonomy negatively affects job stress” and H3d “Autonomy positively affects life satisfaction”. The study's findings supported H2d, but no significant relationship was found to support H1d and H3d. In other words autonomy may reduce stress for service workers but will not motivate them.

Article 2:	Impact of Job autonomy on Customer orientation: Mediating role of Affective commitment
Journal:	International Journal of Science and Business (2021)
Authors:	Hasan Farid, Xiongying Niu
Purpose:	Investigates effective commitment relation to customer orientation by looking at how three types of work autonomy (WMA, DMA, WSA) effect customer orientation by looking at employees' emotional commitment using self-determination theory.
Method:	Data was collected using a survey questionnaire; answers from 153 frontline service employees working in hotels in China were included in the data analysis. The data was analyzed by using descriptive statistics and structural equation modeling. For assessing their hypotheses, they examined coefficient

	estimates, t-values, and effect sizes.
Results:	The results showed that all three forms of autonomy had a positive effect on employees' affective commitment, and affective commitment was found to be positively related to customer orientation ($r = 0.457, p < 0.01$). The decision-making dimension of job autonomy (DMA) exhibited the strongest association with employee behavioral outcomes, followed by work method autonomy (WMA), and then work schedule autonomy (WSA). This indicates a hierarchy of importance among these three different dimensions of job autonomy.
Database:	Google scholar

The coefficient estimates find all three dimensions of job autonomy are positively related to affective commitment. As mentioned their findings indicate a hierarchy of importance among the different dimensions. DMA's relation to affective commitment was highest with a correlation coefficient of 0.577, WMA and WSA having 0.463 and 0.313 respectively. To test their hypotheses they used structural equation modeling, the direct paths analysis found a similar hierarchy among the dimensions of job autonomy. The indirect paths analysis looked at autonomy's indirect effect on customer orientation through the mediating role of affective commitment. All three dimensions of job autonomy were found to have a significant effect on customer orientation, with the same hierarchical structure. It should also be mentioned that these findings have a low P-value of less than 0.01, indicating that these findings can be considered reliable.

Article 3:	Perceived Empowering Leadership, Harmonious Passion, and Employee Voice: The Moderating Role of Job Autonomy
Journal:	Frontiers in Psychology
Authors:	Ang Gao, Jing Jiang
Purpose:	Expand the literature on empowering leadership and employee voice, how motivation changes over time, connecting leadership with employee voice behavior and how job autonomy affects the relationship between leadership and voice.
Method:	Data was gathered from 674 supervisor-subordinate dyads, through a survey with a 5 point Likert scale. Job autonomy, harmonious passion, and empowering leadership was measured on employees, while supervisors rated employee voice. A proposed six-factor model was proposed and confirmed as the best fit through a confirmatory factor analysis. Leading to their variables being grouped into six destined factors: empowering leadership, harmonious passion, obsessive passion, psychological safety, job autonomy, and employee voice. Multiple regression analysis was used to test their hypotheses, and mediation analysis, moderation analysis, and moderated mediation analysis was used to test relations between different factors.
Results:	Harmonious passion was found to have a significant positive effect on employee voice as well as a mediating role in the relationship between perceived empowering leadership and employee voice. Perceived empowering leadership was found to have a significant positive effect on

	bought employees' harmonious passion and employee voice. Job autonomy was found to act as a moderator in this relationship between harmonious passion and employee voice, amplifying the positive influence harmonious passion has on employee voice. It was also found that when job autonomy was higher, the mediating effect that harmonious passion has on the relationship between empowering leadership and employee voice was stronger.
Database:	Google scholar

In the study's descriptive statistics a correlation between job autonomy and harmonious passion had a correlation coefficient of 0.29 and job autonomy and Empowering leadership had a correlation coefficient of 0.35. This study finds that job autonomy acts as a moderator both directly in the relationship between harmonious passion and employee voice, but also indirectly in the relationship between empowering leadership, harmonious passion, and employee voice. In other words, when employees have job autonomy and view their leadership as empowering, it's more likely they develop harmonious passion, which leads to increased employee voice.

Article 4:	Non-Financial Incentives and Job Satisfaction among Hotel Workers in Port Harcourt
Journal:	Journal of Scientific Research and Reports
Authors:	Justin Mgbechi Odinioha Gabriel, Lawrence I. Nwaeke

Purpose:	Investigate the relationship between non-financial incentives and job satisfaction, with a focus on job enrichment, job autonomy and promotion.
Method:	A five point likert scale questionnaire was used to gather data, the population of the study came from five hotels, the sample of employees was chosen at random and 107 of the submissions were deemed usable for the quantitative analysis. Then statistically analyzed using the statistical package for social sciences software (SPSS)
Results:	The study found significant positive relationships between job enrichment, job autonomy, and promotion, and employee job satisfaction. The study recommends that management should conduct regular performance appraisals, allow employees sufficient freedom to do their jobs, and recognize employees as the organization's most valuable assets.
Database:	Google scholar

The study introduces the concept of job satisfaction's importance by sitting (Hayati & Caniago, 2012) findings on job satisfaction's critical role in fostering intrinsic motivation with one's employees. All non-financial incentives included in the study were found to have positive relationships with job satisfaction, with job enrichment, job autonomy and promotion having correlation coefficient values of 0.643, 0.534 and 0.552 respectively.

Article 5:	To be engaged or not to be engaged: The antecedents and consequences of service employee engagement
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Journal:	Journal of Business Research
Authors:	Bulent Menguc, Seigyoung Auh, Michelle Fisher, Abeer Haddad
Purpose:	Investigate how autonomy, feedback and support affect service employee engagement, and how those findings relate to customers' perceived level of service employee performance.
Method:	The study draws on the Job Demand-Resource model as a conceptual framework. The study uses data from 482 service employees and customers in 66 retail stores, obtained through surveys. The data was analyzed with a Confirmatory factor analysis.
Results:	Receiving clear feedback and having perceived autonomy are important factors in promoting employee engagement, while supervisory support did not have a significant effect on engagement. Employee engagement was found to have a positive impact on customer evaluation of employee performance.
Database:	Google scholar

This study looked at how autonomy moderates supervisory support and supervisory feedback's relationship with work engagement. In regard to supervisory support, it was found to have a positive and statistically significant relationship with autonomy with a coefficient value of 0.22 and a p-value of 0,001. A simple slope analysis was used, where one standard deviation above and below the mean value of perceived autonomy were assessed. It was found that at high levels of perceived autonomy, supervisory support was related positively to

work engagement. While at low levels of perceived autonomy the relationship was found to be not significant.

In regard to supervisory feedback, it was found to have a negative and statistically significant effect with a coefficient value of -0.15 and a p-value of 0.01. Through a similarly structured simple slope analysis it was found that at low levels of perceived autonomy, feedback had a positive and significant relationship with engagement. While at high levels of perceived autonomy, no significant relationship between feedback and engagement was found.

Article 6:	Organizational Culture and Employee Engagement: An Interrelationship Study in Hospitality Industry of Himachal Pradesh
Journal:	International Journal of Human Resource Management and Research
Authors:	NAMRITA KALIA, YOGINDER S. VERMA
Purpose:	To better understand the relationship between employee engagement and organizational culture of hospitality industry employees, and to expand understanding of predictors of organizational culture that influence employee engagement.
Method:	The data was collected from a sample of 151 hotels from four districts in Himachal Pradesh, India. 350 middle management employees were surveyed. The data gathering process was done through a multistage sampling process, to ensure a representative and unbiased selection. The surveys gathered data on employee engagement dimensions (vigor

	dedication and absorption) and on the dimensions of organizational culture (trust, autonomy, experimentation). The gathered data was analyzed using correlation and regression analysis, to explore the relationship between employee engagement and organizational culture.
Results:	The study found a positive and significant relationship between the dimensions of employee engagement and the dimensions of organizational culture. Trust and autonomy was found to have the most significant relationship with the employee engagement dimensions of dedication and absorption. While experimentation was found to have positive relationships with all three dimensions of employee engagement.
Database:	Google scholar

This study wished to build upon previous research that concluded that autonomy was positively related to employee engagement. It sought to investigate this relationship by examining employee engagement across the dimensions of vigor, dedication, and absorption. With vigor they refer to a high energy and mental resilience while working, characterized by a willingness to invest effort and persistence when facing difficulties. Dedication refers to being involved with one's work, through sensing great significance and enthusiasm when working. Absorption refers to being concentrated and immersed in one's work, characterized by workers feeling time passing quickly and difficulty detaching from work. Autonomy was found to contribute more towards absorption, followed by vigor then dedication. With correlation coefficients of 0.401, 0.287 and 0,249 respectively, and all findings having correlation significance of 0.01.

Article 7:	When Do Frontline Hospitality Employees Take Charge? Prosocial Motivation, Taking Charge, and Job Performance: The Moderating Role of Job Autonomy
Journal:	Cornell Hospitality Quarterly
Authors:	Zhenyao Cai, Yuanyuan Huo, Junbang Lan, Ziguang Chen, Wing Lam
Purpose:	This study explored how employees' desire to help others (prosocial motivation) affects their willingness to take initiative at work (taking charge) and job performance in the hospitality industry.
Method:	Data was collected from 185 pairs of employees and their supervisors from a five-star hotel in China, through surveys in two stages three months apart. The survey used a seven point Likert-type scale where, prosocial motivation, job autonomy, taking charge and job performance were measured. A confirmatory factor analysis was used to evaluate convergent validity and discriminant validity. Various statistical analyses were used, including independent sample t-tests, analysis of variance, intraclass correlation coefficient, and hierarchical linear modeling to test hypotheses and test the reliability of their findings.
Results:	This study shows that prosocial motivation and job autonomy can predict "taking charge", and taking charge can also improve an employee's job performance. The results showed that when job autonomy was high, there was a significant positive relationship between prosocial motivation and taking charge. However, when job autonomy was low, this relationship was

	not significant.
Database:	Google scholar

In the context of this study, taking charge is characterized by voluntary and constructive efforts that go beyond one's job description, proactively initiating positive changes to improve work processes and systems. Prosocial motivation refers to an intrinsic motivation to benefit others, characterized by selfless orientation to benefit the wellbeing of the organization. The studies findings supported both their hypothesis that prosocial motivation has a positive relationship with taking charge, and that taking charge is positively related to the evaluation of employees job performance.

The study also tested prosocial motivation and taking charge relationship's relation to job autonomy. Through a simple slope test it was found that job autonomy strengthens the positive relationship. With one standard deviation above the mean the relationship was found to be significantly positive with a standardized regression coefficient value of 0.25, while with one standard deviation below the relationship was found to be not significant.

The study also examined whether autonomy acts as a mediator in the combined impact prosocial motivation and taking charge has on job performance. The results showed that when job autonomy was high, the indirect effect between prosocial motivation and job performance was significant, and not significant when job autonomy was low. Based on these findings, the study suggested creating a more autonomous working environment as a way to encourage proactive extra-role behavior and prosocial attitudes, which in turn was found to benefit job performance.

Article 8:	Role of mobile application attributes in building job meaningfulness among food delivery employees
Journal:	Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management
Authors:	Liu Ting, Jiseon Ahn
Purpose:	This study purpose is to better understand how mobile applications affect food delivery employees' behavior and job outcomes. The authors used self-determination theory to examine how work satisfaction affects motivation and job meaningfulness. The chosen factors to study in regard to work satisfaction were autonomy, competence and relatedness.
Method:	Data was collected using an online self-administered survey from 208 food delivery workers in the United States who used mobile applications for their work. Participants were asked questions about work related experiences, what delivery platform they work for and demographic questions. To evaluate the validity and reliability of the measurement model, the analytical methods of factor loadings, average variance extracted, Cronbach's alpha, and composite reliability were used. For evaluating the relationships between the different variables in the study, partial least squares-structural equation modeling was used. For testing their hypotheses, they used regression coefficients.

Results:	The study found that autonomy, competence, and relatedness all had significant positive relationships with both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation were found to be positively and significantly related to job meaningfulness. Intrinsic motivation had a stronger influence on job meaningfulness, with a higher standardized regression coefficient of 0.51, compared to the coefficient of 0.33 for extrinsic motivations.
Database:	Google scholar

Autonomy was found to have very similar standardized regression coefficients in relation to both intrinsic motivation (0.38) and extrinsic motivation (0.32). The study's findings supported their theories that when an employee's need for autonomy is met, it positively influences their intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation.

5.0 Discussion

In this chapter I will explore the correlation between the findings of the selected articles and elaborate how these findings are interconnected. The discussion is organized into three main categories: intrinsic motivation, emotional relationships, and notable discoveries. A separate category for practical application will provide suggestions for the utilization of these findings.

5.1 Intrinsic motivation

This category will discuss autonomy's effect on internal motivations, how autonomy changes how employees feel about their work and in what ways this changes their behavior.

5.1.1 Motivation through work engagement

Autonomy provides a sense of empowerment and ownership over employee's duties, which fosters work engagement. Individuals feel more responsibility and in control when they are given the freedom to make autonomous decisions and affect their work processes. This autonomy fosters intrinsic motivation and a proactive attitude, resulting in greater engagement in their work (Menguc et al., 2013).

Granting employees control over their work processes allowed them to align their work with their strengths. Having one's work aligned with one's strengths will motivate by fostering a sense of competence. To have the freedom to decide how one approaches one's tasks so one can better utilize one's unique abilities, lets employees feel more capable and empowered. Enabling employees to perform at their best leads to a greater sense of accomplishment and competency with their work. The satisfaction and intrinsic motivation this sense of competence brings enhances work engagement, and the confidence makes employees more likely to be motivated to take on new or more challenges at work.

To be allowed to customize one's approach to one's work creates an opportunity to become more involved with more than just the results, but the process. To be more involved with the planning of work processes and having said process be more personalized, contributes to greater engagement at work (Menguc et al., 2013). This motivates employees as having your work methods more aligned with your preferences makes work more enjoyable, and allows

for more variation of work as you engage with more aspects of your workplace than just your prescribed duties.

5.1.2 Motivation through work satisfaction

When one is involved with not just completing the work, but also in planning the process of how to complete said work, one will get a greater sense of satisfaction from achieving good results. Being involved in the planning aspects of one's tasks creates a greater sense of ownership and a deeper connection to the work carried out. As a result, when the plan or process one took part in designing yields good results, a greater sense of satisfaction is gained as one was involved in more aspects of what yielded said results. Deriving more satisfaction from one's workplace success motivates employees to improve their work performance, as more satisfaction is gained from said performance.

As elaborated above, autonomy let's employees derive more satisfaction from their work and the results of their work. But direct correlations regarding autonomy, job satisfaction and intrinsic motivation have also been found. Autonomy was found to have a significant positive impact on job satisfaction, comparable to the influence of opportunities for promotion and job enrichment (Gabriel & Nwaeke, 2015). Furthermore, job satisfaction has found to have a significant impact on intrinsic motivation (Raza et al., 2015). The relationship between autonomy, job satisfaction, and intrinsic motivation seems to be a positive feedback loop. Autonomy increases job satisfaction, it subsequently increases intrinsic motivation. When employees have a sense of autonomy, they feel more connected to their work, have a stronger sense of purpose, and are likely to be more engaged and intrinsically motivated. This intrinsic motivation, in turn, fuels their job satisfaction, creating a continuous cycle of positive reinforcement.

5.2 Emotional Relationships

This category will discuss autonomy's effect on employee's relationships with their organization, supervisors and colleagues. Most of the articles selected for this thesis either had findings directly relating autonomy to employees emotional attachment to their workplace, or later suggested that their findings regarding autonomy were linked to employees emotional connection to their work environment. In different ways autonomy was found to affect how employees view their workplace and leadership, and changed their behavior and conduct at work.

5.2.1 Motivation through emotional attachment

Autonomy was found to positively improve employees' emotional ties to their work, their place of work, and their leadership. Autonomy was found to be positively and significantly related to affective commitment (Farid & Niu, 2021). Affective commitment is linked to job satisfaction, because a strong bond with one's organization makes one more fulfilled with one's job. The emotional connection makes one's work feel like a contribution to something one feels committed to and affectionate towards, making the contribution more meaningful. This enhances employee engagement, as wanting to contribute towards a larger goal rather than just fulfilling one's basic workplace duties, increases motivation, enthusiasm and dedication. Hence increasing employee's emotional attachment and identification with their organization improves motivation.

The statement that an emotional connection to one's place of work is beneficial for motivation, is also supported by the findings of (Cai et al., 2018) on prosocial motivation. Stating that autonomy strengthened the relationship between taking charge and prosocial motivation, and that this relationship affected job performance more when autonomy was

high. When employees have more autonomy they are more likely to feel more invested and more involved in their tasks and the outcome of their tasks. This leads to feeling more responsible for the outcome of their work, and thereby a stronger sense of responsibility towards their colleagues and the organization as a whole. Furthermore, autonomy signifies trust and respect by their leadership. This sense of empowerment develops a stronger belief in their capabilities, fueling their motivation to live up to the expectations placed upon them.

Through autonomy prosocially motivated employees are given the opportunity to act on their prosocial tendencies. By having a desire to contribute and be helpful to others, and the opportunity to act on that desire, one will act more beneficial to one's colleagues and organization. By being helpful to others, employees will not only create more positive relationships and a supportive workplace environment, but also get more purpose and fulfillment from their work. The alignment between their personal values, the freedom to act on them, and the resulting positive outcomes, creates a virtuous cycle of motivation.

5.2.2 Employee's relations to supervisory action

The study "To be engaged or not to be engaged: The antecedents and consequences of service employee engagement" found direct corrections on autonomy's role in the relationship between the actions of leadership and employees engagement. When autonomy was perceived as high supervisory support had a positive relationship with work engagement, while supervisory feedback had a negative relationship with work engagement. When autonomy was perceived as low no significant relationship was found (Menguc et al., 2013).

This suggests that when employees have a greater sense of freedom and discretion to make their own judgments, supervisory feedback may be seen as restrictive and undermining their

autonomy. In contrast when autonomy is low employees rely more on supervisors for guidance, in this context supervisory feedback may be perceived as more helpful. Their findings on supervisory support suggest that in a context where employees have decision making authority and control of their work, support from supervisors may be seen as a resource that helps their work and compliment their autonomy. This highlights the importance of considering employees' work situation when seeking to motivate them, and demonstrates that the level of autonomy employees have plays a significant role in their perception of supervisory actions.

5.2.3 Employer employee communication

Autonomy was found to directly strengthen the relationship between harmonious passion and employee voice, and indirectly strengthen the interrelationship between empowering leadership, harmonious passion, and employee voice (Gao & Jiang, 2019). These findings suggest that highly autonomous job design allows more room for passionate employees, which enables and inspires them to voice their concerns. Being trusted with the freedom to make decisions and having a sense of ownership of one's work, creates a greater sense of responsibility to express constructive ideas and criticisms to their leadership. Increasing job autonomy fosters employee voice, which promotes more open and transparent communication, which leads to a closer and more collaborative relations between employees and employers.

5.3 Notable discoveries

This category will discuss findings not essential for answering the problem statement, but still gives insight into autonomy's effect on job motivation.

5.3.1 Autonomy and extrinsic motivation

The article "Role of mobile application attributes in building job meaningfulness among food delivery employees" found comparable standardized regression coefficients for autonomy's relationship with both extrinsic motivation and intrinsic motivation (Ting & Ahn, 2022).

Which is an interesting finding as autonomy is commonly associated with intrinsic motivation rather than extrinsic motivation. This is also the only article from my selection to write about autonomy's direct relation to extrinsic motivation, further arguing the point that autonomy is usually not associated with extrinsic motivation. I suggest that this correlation is found because of the nature of the work they studied. Having more autonomy while receiving performance based pay will increase extrinsic motivation, as it gives employees more control over external rewards. This emphasizes the importance of analyzing the nature of the work, and incentives of the employees when attempting to improve motivation.

5.3.2 Autonomy as a motivational hygiene factor

Autonomy was found in the article "Motivating frontline employees: Role of Job Characteristics in work and life satisfaction" to reduce stress but not improve life satisfaction or job satisfaction (Zhao et al., 2016). The study later further elaborated on these findings, suggesting that autonomy may be a hygiene factor that reduces withdrawal attitudes, but won't improve motivation. With the large number of findings positively correlating autonomy with motivation, I personally find this theory to be unlikely, but still worth

exploring. As stated, due to the broad nature of the term “motivation”, this thesis explores elements of motivation and sources of motivation. Due to this there is room to consider the idea that autonomy itself may not directly motivate. Instead, autonomy may play a role in facilitating and supporting other motivational elements, and protect against the decline of motivation due to a lack of control and employees feeling disempowered.

5.4 Practical applications

As having a motivated workforce is universally beneficial for any type of organization, supervisors and employers should utilize autonomy as a job resource where possible. Based on the insights gained from the scientific articles selected for this thesis, I have developed some suggestions for leaders on how to apply this information in a workplace.

1: Grant autonomy: Provide employees with both the freedom and opportunity to make autonomous decisions and grant them control over their work processes where feasible.

2: Foster a workplace culture of autonomy: Create a workplace environment which promotes and values autonomy. This can be done through encouraging employees to take ownership of their tasks, make autonomous decisions and control their own work processes. Through this one’s work environment will enhance work engagement and motivation.

3: Encourage more open communication and feedback: Encourage regular exchanges of feedback between supervisors and employees. Create a more transparent and supportive communication at one’s workplace, so employees feel more comfortable expressing their

ideas, critiques and suggestions. This will foster a greater sense of trust and more collaboration between the workforce and their leadership.

4: Involve employees in decision making processes: Include employees in discussion and meeting when decisions that affect their work are made. Allow them to contribute with their suggestions and ideas, and seek their input and perspectives. Involving employees in these types of discussions, increases their sense of ownership and commitment to the outcomes of their work.

5: Autonomy-supportive leadership: Train and educate supervisors and leaders on how to adopt autonomous working conditions to their branch or sector. This involves guidance on how to provide feedback and resources while respecting employee's autonomy. Ensure they are aware of the differing effects supervisory actions have in different levels of autonomy.

6: Provide clear goals and guidelines: Ensure that employees clearly understand the organization's goals and guidelines. Despite employees having affectionate commitment towards their organization, miscommunication combined with autonomy can result in negative outcomes. Communicate expectations and objectives clearly, as this will help employees align their autonomous decisions in line with the overall goal of the organization.

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