
Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory

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Abstract: Background: Motivation-hygiene theory is also known as Herzberg's two-factor theory or Herzberg's dual-factor theory (1959). The main concept of this theory is the difference between motivation factors and hygiene factors. These two factors that have an effect on job satisfaction are divided into two sets of categories. Hygiene factors are considered less important to job satisfaction than motivation factors. Hygiene factors are related to 'the need to avoid unpleasantness'. Motivation factors lead to job satisfaction because of 'the need of the individual for self-growth and self-actualisation'. This theory is one of the most commonly used theories in job satisfaction research (Dion, 2006). Many studies in nursing research have used this theory as a theoretical framework in testing job satisfaction among nurses (Kacel *et al.*, 2005; Mitchell, 2009; Jones, 2011). The results of those studies support Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory, and assert that the hygiene factors are less important to job satisfaction; however, the motivation factors are most important and can lead to job satisfaction. This theory seemed to identify and explain the phenomena of job satisfaction.

Keywords: Job dissatisfaction, job satisfaction, Herzberg's Motivation-Hygiene Theory, Herzberg's two-factor theory.

1. Introduction

In 1959, Herzberg, Mausner and Snyderman published the two-factor model of work motivation and developed the motivation-hygiene theory, which was influenced by Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Jones, 2011). Herzberg created a two-dimensional paradigm of factors influencing people's attitudes towards work. Initially Herzberg and his colleagues developed a hypothesis that satisfaction and dissatisfaction with a job were affected by two different sets of factors and thus satisfaction and dissatisfaction could not be reliably measured on the same continuum (Herzberg *et al.*, 1959; Stello, 2011). Studies on job satisfaction were conducted to decide which factors in an employee's work environment caused satisfaction or dissatisfaction. After two pilot studies, the first involving 13 labourers, clerical workers, foremen, plant engineers and accountants, and the second involving 39 middle-managers, his theory was further developed and expanded (Herzberg *et al.*, 1959). Herzberg, 1966; Subsequently, Herzberg *et al.* (1959) studied more than 203 accountants and engineers working in nine factories in the Pittsburgh area of the United States to determine which factors influence the worker's work environment and cause satisfaction or dissatisfaction (Herzberg *et al.*, 1959). The main hypothesis of Herzberg's theory was that certain factors lead to positive attitudes towards work, and others lead to negative attitudes. The other hypotheses stated that the factors and effects involving long-range sequences of events and short-range

sequences of events, respectively, were distinct (Herzberg *et al.*, 1959; Stello, 2011). According to their research data, the original hypothesis of the Herzberg study was restated and then changed to the two-factor theory of job satisfaction. The two factors that had an effect on job satisfaction were divided into two sets of categories. The first category was associated with 'the need for growth or self-actualisation', and became known as the motivation factors. Motivation factors included achievement, recognition, the work itself, responsibility, advancement and the possibility for growth (Herzberg, 1966; Herzberg, 2003). The other category of factors was related to 'the need to avoid unpleasantness', and was known as hygiene factors. Hygiene factors included company policies and administration, relationship with supervisors, interpersonal relations, working conditions and salary (Herzberg, 1966; Herzberg, 2003). Motivation factors led to positive job attitudes and hygiene factors surrounded the 'doing' of the job (Herzberg *et al.*, 1959; Stello, 2011).

At the heart of the two-factor theory is the difference between motivation and hygiene factors, or intrinsic and extrinsic factors. Herzberg described motivation factors as intrinsic to the job and hygiene factors as extrinsic to the job. Thus, motivation factors operate to only increase and improve job satisfaction; whereas hygiene factors work to reduce job dissatisfaction. According to Herzberg *et al.* (1959).

Among the factors of hygiene, when the factors deteriorate to a level below that which the employee

considers acceptable, then job dissatisfaction ensues. However, the reverse does not hold true. When job context can be characterised as optimal, we will not get dissatisfaction but neither will we get much in the way of positive attitudes. It is primarily the ‘motivators’ that serve to bring about that kind of job satisfaction (pp. 113–114).

The presence of motivational factors can produce job satisfaction, but their absence leads to no job satisfaction. Therefore, poor hygiene factors can cause job dissatisfaction, while better hygiene factors can reduce dissatisfaction but cannot cause job satisfaction (Herzberg *et al.*, 1959). Herzberg explained that the opposite of job dissatisfaction is no job dissatisfaction. Likewise, the opposite of job satisfaction is no job satisfaction (Herzberg, 1966; Herzberg, 2003).

Herzberg’s theory is one of the most significant content theories in job satisfaction (Dion, 2006). Further, Herzberg’s two-factor theory was noted by many researchers to be the most effective needs satisfaction model used in healthcare organisations (Timmreck, 2001 Cahill, 2011). Herzberg’s two-factor

theory has also been used widely by researchers evaluating nursing job satisfaction (Best & Thurston, 2004; Kacel *et al.*, 2005; Rambur, McIntosh, Palumbo, & Reinier, 2005; Hegney *et al.*, 2006; Lephala, 2006; Russell & Gelder, 2008; Mitchell, 2009; Jones, 2011; Mc Glynn *et al.*, 2012).

The following tables are summaries of Herzberg’s two-factor theory. Table 1 displays the motivation and hygiene factors. Table 2 provides comparisons between the motivation and hygiene factors.

Table 1: Summary of the Factors in Herzberg’s Theory

| Motivation Factors | Hygiene Factors |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------|
| Advancement | Interpersonal relationship |
| Work itself | Salary |
| Possibility of growth | Policies and administration |
| Responsibility | Supervision |
| Recognition | Working conditions |
| Achievement | |

Table 2: Comparisons between the Two Factors of Herzberg’s Theory

| | Motivation Factors | Hygiene Factors |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Absent | The outcome is no satisfaction | The outcome is dissatisfaction |
| Present | The outcome is satisfaction | The outcome is no dissatisfaction |
| Herzberg described | Intrinsic to the job | Extrinsic to the job |
| Important to job satisfaction | Strong | Poor |

The main concepts behind the two-factor theory are the difference between the motivation and hygiene factors.

Motivation factors

The word ‘motivation’ comes from the Latin word mover or ‘to move’. The definition of motivation is ‘how to provide something to a person to drive him/her to do something’ (Ruthankoon & Ogunlana, 2003, p. 333). In the two-factor theory, motivation is the variable most strongly correlated with job satisfaction and Herzberg and his colleagues argued that to increase employees’ job satisfaction the motivation factors must be improved (see Table 2). According to Herzberg’s theory, motivation factors, or motivators, are intrinsic to the job and lead to positive attitudes towards the job because they satisfy the ‘need for growth or self-actualisation’ (Herzberg, 1966, p. 75). Motivation factors are related to a person’s job satisfaction and include advancement, the work itself, possibility of growth, responsibility, recognition and achievement (Herzberg, 1966). The following is a brief explanation of each of the motivation factors (Herzberg, 1966; Adair, 2006).

Advancement.

Advancement is defined as the upward and positive status or position of the person or employee in

the workplace. A negative, or neutral status at work is considered negative advancement.

The work itself.

The actual content of job tasks and assignments has either a positive or a negative effect upon employees. Whether the job is too easy or too difficult, interesting or boring, can impact satisfaction or dissatisfaction of employees in the workplace.

Possibility for growth.

Possibilities for growth are the actual opportunities for a person to experience personal growth and be promoted in the workplace. This allows for professional growth, increased chances to learn new skills, undergo training in new techniques and gaining new professional knowledge.

Responsibility.

This factor includes both responsibility and authority in relation to the job. Responsibility is related to gaining satisfaction from being given the responsibility and freedom to make decisions. Gaps between responsibility and authority negatively impact job satisfaction leading to dissatisfaction.

Recognition.

Positive recognition happens when employees receive praise or rewards for reaching specific goals at their job, or when they produce high quality work.

While negative recognition at work includes criticism and blame for the job done.

Achievement.

Positive achievement includes achieving a specific success, such as completing a difficult task on time, solving a job-related problem, or seeing positive results of one's work. Negative achievement involves failure to make progress at work or poor decision-making on the job.

Hygiene factors

The term hygiene comes from the Latin word 'hygiēna'. According to Herzberg and colleagues, this term is used in reference to 'medical hygiene...[which] operates to remove health hazards from the environment' (1959, p. 113). Disease from health hazards or hygiene is preventable; similarly, employee dissatisfaction from hygiene issues at work is preventable. Hygiene factors are the variables correlated with reducing the level of job dissatisfaction, as opposed to motivation factors, which directly influence an employee's motivation and satisfaction. Hygiene factors are related to the conditions that surround the 'doing' of the job or the workplace. Herzberg states that the hygiene factors are extrinsic to the job, and if present, lead to preventing job dissatisfaction because hygiene factors react to the environment and workplace for 'the need to avoid unpleasantness' (Herzberg, 1966, p. 75). Hygiene factors operate to decrease the job dissatisfaction of the employees (see Table 2). Hygiene factors are related to the context of the work itself, and include interpersonal relations, salary, company policies and administration, relationship with supervisors and working conditions (Herzberg, 1966). The following is a brief summary of the hygiene factors (Herzberg, 1966; Adair, 2006)):

Interpersonal relations.

These relationships are limited to the personal and working relationships between the worker and her/his superiors, subordinates and peers. This includes job-related interactions and social discussions in the work environment and during break times.

Salary.

This includes all forms of compensation at one's place of work, such as wage or salary increases, or unfulfilled expectations of wage or salary increases or decrease. Hospital policies should be clear regarding salary increases and bonuses in the workplace.

Company policies and administration.

This includes descriptions of adequate or inadequate company organisation and management policies and guidelines. This factor involves good or poor organisational policies that affect the employee. For example, they may include a lack of delegation of authority, poor policies and procedures and poor communication.

Supervision.

Supervision is associated with the competence or incompetence, and fairness or unfairness of the supervisor or supervision. This includes the supervisor's willingness to delegate responsibility or to teach, fairness and job knowledge. A good supervisor, or access to supervision, is important to enhance the employee's level of job satisfaction. Poor leadership or management may decrease the level of job satisfaction in the workplace.

Working conditions.

These factors involve the physical surroundings of the job, and whether there are good or poor facilities. Working conditions may include the amount of work, space, ventilation, tools, temperature and safety. A good environment, as opposed to a poor environment, makes employees satisfied and proud.

Literature review

Herzberg's theory continues to be used to determine and identify the level of job satisfaction in research in a variety of international settings. Numerous studies in nursing populations utilised Herzberg's theory when researching job satisfaction, and several have also used it as a conceptual framework (i.e., Kacel *et al.*, 2005; Lephala, 2006; Russell & Gelder, 2008; Mitchell, 2009; Jones, 2011; Alshmemri *et al* 2016)).

Kacel and colleagues (2005) employed Herzberg's theory as a framework in their study of job satisfaction among 147 nurse practitioners in a Midwestern area of the United States. This quantitative descriptive study found that both hygiene and motivation factors contributed to job satisfaction. Further, the authors mentioned that improving hygiene factors, especially salaries and compensation, improved job satisfaction.

Lephala (2006) studied the factors influencing 136 nurses and their turnover in selected private hospitals in England, using Herzberg's theory as her frame work. The quantitative descriptive study used questionnaires and found that intrinsic (motivation) factors influenced nursing turnover and dissatisfaction. Further, extrinsic (hygiene) factors influenced nurses' dissatisfaction with salary and administration policies.

A study utilising the motivation-hygiene theory as a framework was conducted by Mitchell (2009) who studied job satisfaction and burnout among 453 foreign-trained nurses in Saudi Arabia. This was a mixed method study and used a three-instrument survey and focus group discussions. Herzberg's theory served as the framework for the study, which found that job satisfaction was influenced by both motivation and hygiene factors. These factors were recognition of the work itself, salary, work conditions, achievement, company policy and administration, relationships with

supervisors and relationships with peers. However, they attributed job dissatisfaction to hygiene factors, such company policy and administration, work conditions, status, relationships with supervisors, security and personal life.

Russell and Gelder (2008) studied job design and job satisfaction in 331 members of the International Transplant Nurses Society (ITNS), using Herzberg's theory of motivation. This descriptive, correlation design study used an electronic version of the job design and job satisfaction survey that was mailed to all members of the ITNS. The authors mentioned that the results of the study support Herzberg's theory that motivation factors, including achievement, recognition, the work itself and responsibility and advancement, led to job satisfaction.

Jones (2011) studied the effects of motivation and hygiene factors on job satisfaction on 135 school nurses. A quantitative, cross-sectional survey design was utilised. The study results revealed that the school nurses were satisfied with organisational policies and pay. However, they were dissatisfied with their jobs. Autonomy had the most influence on job satisfaction and task requirements and their professional status negatively affected overall job dissatisfaction.

Alshmemri, Shahwan-Akl and Maude (2016) studied job satisfaction among Saudi nurses in three main public hospitals in Saudi Arabia. The study had a mixed method design and utilised Herzberg's theory as its theoretical framework. Two hundred and seventy two Saudi nurses were surveyed to identify which factors they believed led to job satisfaction. The results of the study supported Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory and asserted that the hygiene factors were less important to job satisfaction; nevertheless, the motivation factors were most important and led to job satisfaction.

Summary

Herzberg's two-factor theory, also known as the motivation-hygiene theory is one of the most significant theories related to job satisfaction (Dion, 2006). The main concept of Herzberg's theory is the difference between the two factors: motivation and hygiene. Motivation factors include achievement, recognition, the work itself, responsibility, advancement and the possibility for growth (Herzberg, 1966; Herzberg, 2003). Hygiene factors include company policies and administration, relationship with supervisors, interpersonal relations, working conditions and salary (Herzberg, 1966; Herzberg, 2003). Motivation factors lead to positive attitudes towards the job and hygiene factors surround the 'doing' of the job (Herzberg *et al.*, 1959; Stello, 2011). This theory is one of the most commonly used theories

in job satisfaction research (Dion, 2006) as evident in the literature review discussed in this paper.

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