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Assessing the Influence of Job Characteristics and Self-Efficacy on Job Performance: A Structural Equation Modeling Analysis

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Abstract

Job performance, in general, is a critical factor for business success. In a rapidly changing technology and communications sector, there is a need to study the factors that may result in good or bad performance, since identifying these factors could lead to improvements in the work environment. The purpose of this study was to assess the effect of job characteristics on self-efficacy and job performance. Moreover, the study aimed at testing the effect of self-efficacy on job performance.

The methodology consisted of a self-administered survey design where questionnaires were distributed to a convenience sample of 279 employees working with corporations listed in technology and communication sector in Amman Stock Exchange. Structural Equation Modeling was the statistical technique utilized to examine if the collected data supported the researcher's proposed model. The results found support for the proposed model, indicating that all dimensions of job characteristics, including skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback, contributed to job characteristics. Furthermore, results found support for the effect of the job characteristics on each of self-efficacy and job performance, and failed to find support for the effect of self-efficacy on job performance.

Keywords: Job characteristics, self-efficacy, and job performance
JEL Classification Codes: M10, M12, J81

1. Introduction

The business environment's complexity and increasing uncertainty has forced organizations into establishing modern and flexible systems to be more adaptive to change in internal and external environment. This situation creates a managerial challenge that has to be dealt with in an efficient and effective manner. Much of management and organization researches were rooted in the desire to understand the factors that contribute to increase job performance levels. Over a long time, practitioners and researchers discussed job performance for individuals and groups. The importance of job performance in organizations creates a challenge in front of management regarding recruitment and selection of manpower, training, and motivating them. Job performance is considered an important variable in this concern because of its role in affecting the organizational results and outcomes.

Since 1990s there had been many studies argued the relationship between job characteristics and organizational outcomes, such as job performance and other related variables. It is experienced that bad designed jobs might have a negative impact on work attitudes and behaviors. Therefore, it is essential to design jobs so that stress can be reduced, motivation can be enhanced, and satisfaction of employees and their performance can be improved so that organizations can effectively compete in the global marketplace (Abu Elanain, 2009). As for self-efficacy, it contains a motivational component that may affect the effort intended to produce outcomes. According to Bandura (1997), self-efficacious individuals set higher goals, are more persevering towards achieving these goals, and, in turn, perform better than individuals with low self-efficacy. Self-efficacy has influence on how individuals feel about themselves, motivation, task persistence, affective thought, and action (Everett, 2010). Strong self-efficacious beliefs provide employee with determination, and make difficult tasks be viewed as challenges.

There was a lack of studies linking self-efficacy to job characteristics, thus the author attempted to bridge the gap and open a new avenue of future research. To assess the influence of job characteristics and self-efficacy on job performance, the author developed a model linking the dimensions of job characteristics and self-efficacy to job performance. The model will be tested and analyzed through using the structural equation modeling technique.

In the remainder of the research, the study discusses the literature review and presents the research hypotheses, discusses the research method, presents the results, and provides the conclusions, and implications.

2. Review of the Literature

2.1. Job Characteristics

Job characteristics are dominant variables that shape work environment and determine how employees perceive their work. For example, enriched jobs are believed to lead to higher levels of self-esteem since they are less structured, and allow employees to exercise self-control in their assigned jobs. Enriched job characteristics would lead to positive cognitive and psychological condition of the incumbent.With high levels of autonomoy, employees are more likely to come to see themselves as self-efficacious and competent within the duties and assignments of their work.

Job characteristics are concerned with how the work is done and the nature of tasks associated with that work. Job characteristics has been defined as the job design that results in three psychological states namely meaningfulness of the work performed, responsibility for work outcomes and knowledge of the results of work performed that bring about positive work outcomes (Hackman and Oldham, 1975).The core job characteristics that influence the first critical psychological state, meaningfulness of the work performed, are skill variety, task identity, and task significance. The core job characteristic that influences the second critical psychological state, responsibility for work outcomes is autonomy.The third core job characteristic, influencing the final critical psychological state, knowledge of the results of work performed, is job feedback (Kulik et al., 1987).

Job characteristics comprise five dimensions as defined below:

1. *Skill variety*: Skill variety is the degree to which the job requires incumbents to perform a wide range of activities using various skills and talents. The employee who is open to change is likely to be motivated when having a job variety.
2. *Task identity*: Task identity is “the degree to which a job requires completion of a “whole” and identifiable piece of work that is, doing a job from beginning to end with a visible outcome” (Hackman & Oldham, 1975, p. 161).
3. *Task autonomy*: Autonomy involves freedom to make decisions and present solutions to all problems in relation to the job with limited control from supervisors. It is the degree of freedom the job provides to the incumbent in scheduling and conducting the work.

4. *Task significance*: Task significance is "the degree to which the job has a substantial impact on the lives of other people, whether those people are in the immediate organization or in the world at large" (Hackman & Oldham, 1975, p. 161).
5. *Feedback*: Supervisor or others feedback relates to the degree to which performing the work activities results in the employee obtaining direct and clear information about the performance effectiveness.

2.2. Self-Efficacy

The concept of self-efficacy was developed by Albert Bandura (1977) in an effort to interpret and predict human behavior. Self-efficacy was defined by Bandura (1986) as "people's judgments of their capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required attaining designated types of performances" (p. 391). Essentially, self-efficacy is an individual's belief about her or his ability to perform a job. Self-efficacy beliefs provide the foundation for human motivation, well-being, and personal accomplishment, because unless people believe that their actions can produce the outcomes they desire, they have little incentive to act or to persevere in the face of difficulties (Pajares. 2002).

When individuals are persuaded that they have the capabilities necessary to perform job duties, they are expected to exert more effort. Those who are persuaded that they do not have the capabilities to perform job duties; they often demonstrate less desire to do the job.

Self-efficacy which is based on the individual`s self-concept depends on how the individual presents himself to organization and society, which is colored by experiences with self and with others. According to Bandura (1997), self-efficacy beliefs are acquired from four sources: The first source, self-efficacy beliefs may be enhanced through *mastery* experiences wherein through repeated achievements, the individual gains confidence in his or her ability. A second source is *vicarious learning* or the information obtained through observing others when performing their duties and interpreting these observations. Third, there is *symbolic experience* through social persuasion by others. The fourth source in this connection is *emotional arousal* wherein the individual experiences anger or stress or anxiety which may affect the development of that individual's self-efficacy.

As with systems theory, self-efficacy is influenced by the surrounding environment.

Wood and Bandura (1989) emphasized that people are both "products and producers of their environment". Personal efficacy is the part of an individual that interacts in a complex manner with the environment as well as with other motivational and self-regulatory mechanisms and with personal capabilities and performance accomplishments (Bandura, 1986).

For individuals who possess a strong sense of self-efficacy, difficult tasks are perceived as challenges, and they do their best to overcome all obstacles in their way to perform the tasks. Individuals with low sense of self-efficacy tend to set easier goals, suffer from job stress, and avoid facing the challenges.

2.3. Job Performance

Job performance is one of the most important constructs in organizational theory and human resource management. Job performance involves a quantity and quality of outcomes from individual or group effort attainment (Schermerhorn, Hunt, & Osborn, 2005). Generally speaking, job performance can be considered as a contribution to the goals and objectives of any organization. Furthermore, performance can be divided into individual performance and group performance. Group performance is evaluated through taking into consideration the individual's participation in the group activities.

In fact, job performance is comprised of three broad components:

Task performance: Task performance is described as "the proficiency with which incumbents perform activities that are formally recognized as part of their jobs; activities that contribute to the organization's technical core either directly by implementing a part of its technological process, or

indirectly by providing it with needed materials or services" (Borman & Motowidlo, 1993, p. 73). Therefore, task performance involves doing what is expected by organization as part of the job.

Citizenship: Organizational citizenship behavior was defined as discretionary behavior at work that is not part of employees' job descriptions and not explicitly rewarded by the organization, which at the aggregate level contributes towards organizational effectiveness (Organ, 1988). Citizenship performance can contribute indirectly to the goals of the organization by affecting its environment.

Counterproductive performance: Counterproductive performance has the potential to harm the well-being of the organization (Rotundo & Sackett, 2002). It refers to employee behavior that violates organizational norms and threatens the well-being of other employees.

Although there have been some efforts to develop models of job performance that contain all aspects of the job, the most of the researches has generally been put into investigating antecedents and/or outcomes of task performance.

Campbell (1990) offers a more detailed eight-factor model of job performance, which includes: job specific task proficiency, non-job-specific task proficiency, written and oral communication tasks, demonstrating effort, maintaining personal discipline, facilitating peer and team job performance, a supervision, and management.

Borman and Motowidlo (1993) describe a two dimensional model that separates job performance into a task dimension and a contextual dimension. They describe task performance as activities related to production and to maintaining the core requirements. Werner's (1994) study has investigated the two-factor model concludes that the job performance includes two separated characteristics: role prescribed (inrole) characteristics and citizenship (extrarole) characteristics.

Grant (1996) could not interpret her findings with either the eight or the two factors, and instead, tried to include three factors in her new model. Her model depended on three main dimensions: Do-Inrole dimension, Know-Inrole dimension, and Extra-role dimension.

Moreover, feedback information is a very important variable and may enhance the job performance level. As per Kluger and DeNisi (1996), feedback can result in improved performance, decreased performance, or no effect on performance, depending on the specific type of feedback provided. In general, computerized feedback directs attention to the task itself, whereas human feedback can affect employee's behavior.

Arising from the above literature review, the following hypotheses were formulated.

H1. There is a significant relationship between job characteistics and self-efficacy.

H2. There is a significant relationship between self-efficacy and job performance.

H3. There is a significant relationship between job characteistics and job performance.

3. Methods

3.1. Participants

The data used in the current research consists of questionnaire responses from participants working at technology and communications sector in Jordan. A total of 500 questionnaires were randomly distributed, and only 283 filled questionnaires were returned. Out of those returned questionnaires 4 were deleted due to incomplete data sets, leaving a total sample of 279 usable questionnaires.

3.2. Instruments

The assessments for this study contained three sections: job characteristics, self-efficacy, and job performance. All items in the questionnaire were measured by a 5-point Likert scale with anchors ranging from 1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree.

The first section sought the perceptions of respondents on the five dimensions of job characteristics (skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback), which were measured based on the 15-item Job Diagnostic Survey developed by Hackman and Oldham (1975).

The second section, self-efficacy, was measured by three items partially adapted from Weiss, et al (1967) and Jones (1986). Section three measured job performance, adapting three items from various studies, such as Pearce and Porter (1986), and Babin and Boles (1998).

4. Results

The data were entered and analyzed using the SPSS 18 and Analysis of Moment Structures (AMOS) Version 16. Data set were screened for accuracy of data entry, adequacy of sample size, missing values, outliers and normality. Due to the relatively low number (4) of deleted questionnaires because of the incomplete data, it was decided that usable questionnaires for the sample size was still adequate for analyses. At the same time, maximum likelihood assumes that data is normally distributed and that analysis utilizing this method will not provide reliable results when the data are not normally distributed. To test the proposed hypotheses, the study employed structural equation modeling (SEM) because it is a statistical technique which integrates path and factor analysis.

Measurement Model

In order to establish reliability of the research instrument, it is necessary to test all the constructs' Cronbach's alpha. In this study, the Cronbach's alpha values were .712 for the job characteristics construct, .708 for the self-efficacy construct, and .732 for the job performance construct. As shown in Table I, all Cronbach's alpha values listed along the diagonal, exceeded the suggested 0.7 threshold, demonstrating a good level of reliability (Robinson et al, 1991).

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics and Correlations of the Constructs

Construct	Mean	Std. Dev.	1	2	3
1. job characteristics	3.512	.573	.712		
2. self-efficacy	3.109	.956	.178*	.708	
3. Job Performance	3.357	.997	.261*	.177*	.732

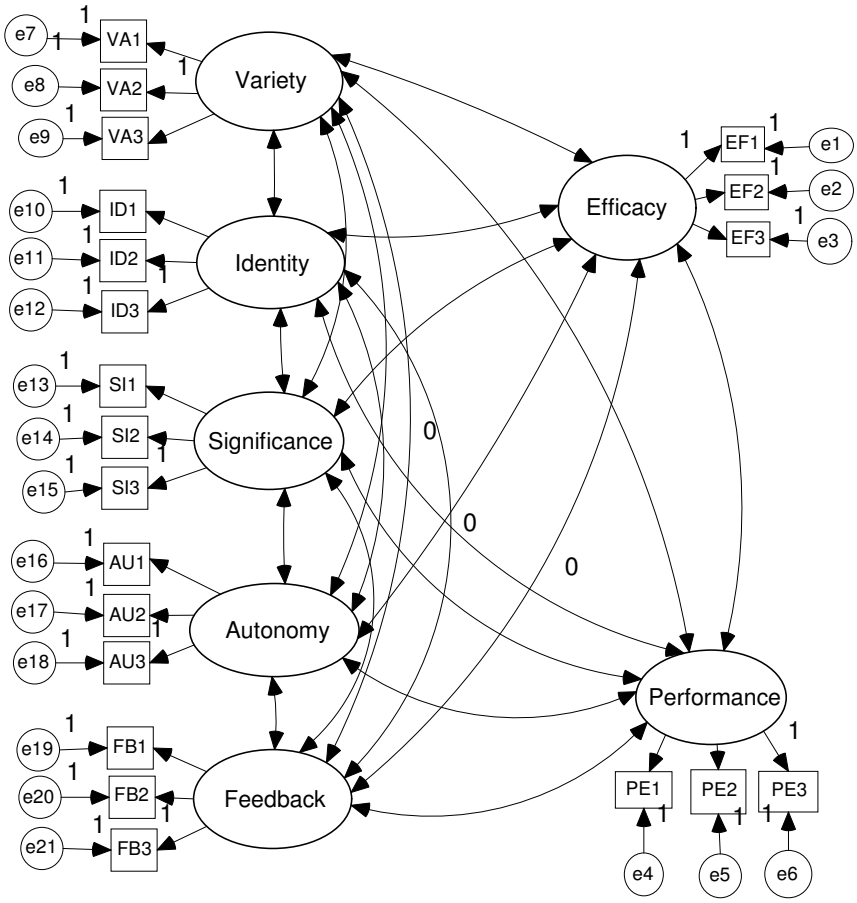
*p < .05

It could be noticed that the means for the three constructs ranged from 3.109 to 3.512, indicating moderate levels of responding towards the study constructs. The sample appears to have small dispersion in their response on self-efficacy and job performance based on the slightly large standard deviation of their scores.

All variables were subjected to a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) through running the maximum likelihood estimate to assess and validate the relationships between each latent construct and the observed measures. Figure 2 showed the measurement model which presented the overall relationships.

Results of the fit statistics after running the confirmatory factor analysis indicated that the chi-square statistic (x^2) = 176.551; degrees of freedom (df) = 171; chi-square normed by degrees of freedom (x^2/df) = 1.032; statistical significance (p) = .370; standardized root mean residual (SRMR) = .0418; goodness-of-fit index (GFI) = .944; adjusted goodness-of-fit index (AGFI) = .925; comparative fit index (CFI) = .997; Tucker-Lewis index (TLI) = .996; root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = .011.

Figure 2: Measurement Model



For a model to be evaluated as a good fit, the x^2/df should be 3:1 or less (Hair et al, 2010) and the RMSEA and SRMR should both not exceed 0.08 (Hu and Bentler, 1999). Therefore, the model fit the data very well since p was non-significant and all the indices were within the recommended ranges.

Moreover, the output indicated that the z-statistic of the multivariate normality was 4.331, which could be considered highly suggestive of normality in the sample data. Bentler (2005) suggests that values of less than 5.00 are indicative of normally distributed data. Convergent validity was assessed using composite reliability (CR) and average variance extracted (AVE). The results were shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Composite Reliability and Average Variance Extracted

Constructs	Measures	Standardized Estimate	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted
Skill variety	- VA1 - VA2 - VA3	.632 .768 .716	.75	.50
Task identity	- ID1 - ID2 - ID3	.884 .769 .671	.82	.61
Task significance	- SI1 - SI2 - SI3	.878 .834 .865	.89	.74
Task autonomy	- AU1 - AU2 - AU3	.878 .667 .624	.77	.54

Table 2: Composite Reliability and Average Variance Extracted - continued

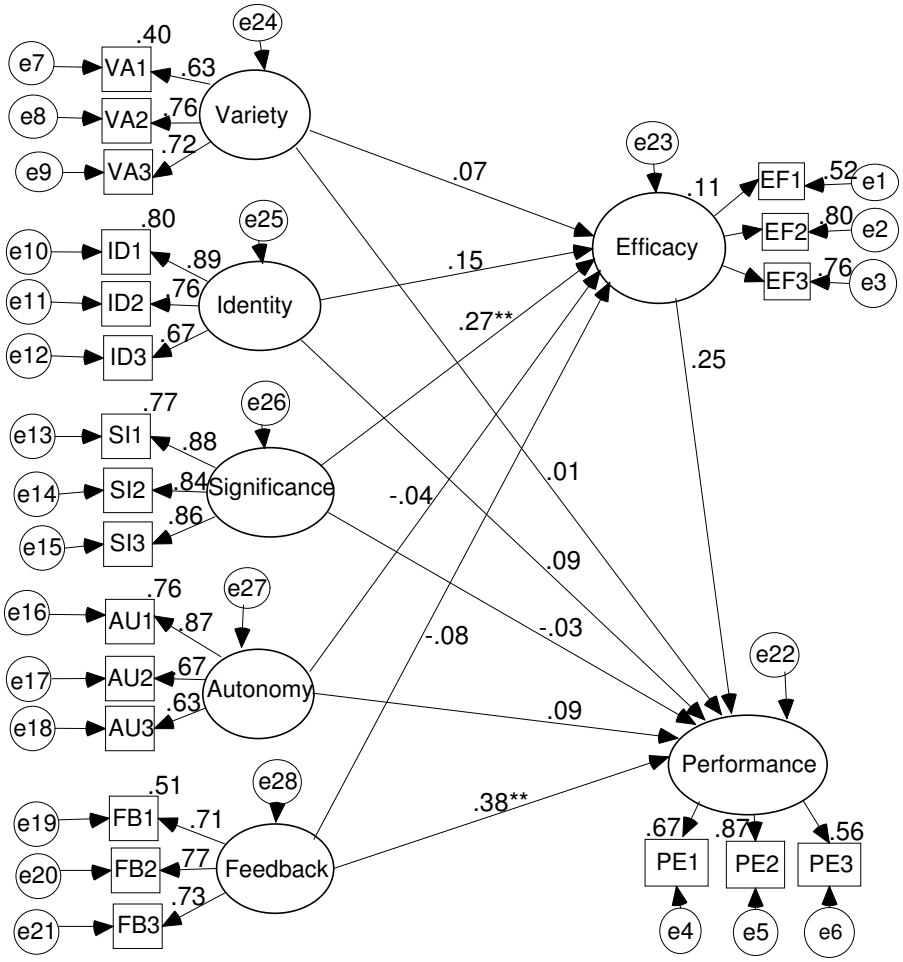
Feedback	- FB1 - FB2 - FB3	.709 .772 .729	.78	.54
Self-efficacy	- EF1 - EF2 - EF3	.517 .805 .760	.74	.50
Job Performance	- PE1 - PE2 - PE3	.675 .872 .567	.75	.51

Results in Table 2 showed that all composite reliability scores for all constructs were greater than the recommended threshold of .70 indicating compliance with thresholds, and also all the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values exceeded .50 (Fornell & Larcker 1981). As suggested by Hair et al (2010), all composite reliability measures are greater than .70 and greater than average variance extracted. Hence, enough evidence supported convergent validity.

Structural model

The structural model differs from the measurement model in that the emphasis moves from the relationships between latent constructs and measured variables to the nature and magnitude of the relationships between constructs (Hair et al., 2010). Figure 2 depicts the results of the hypothesized theoretical model.

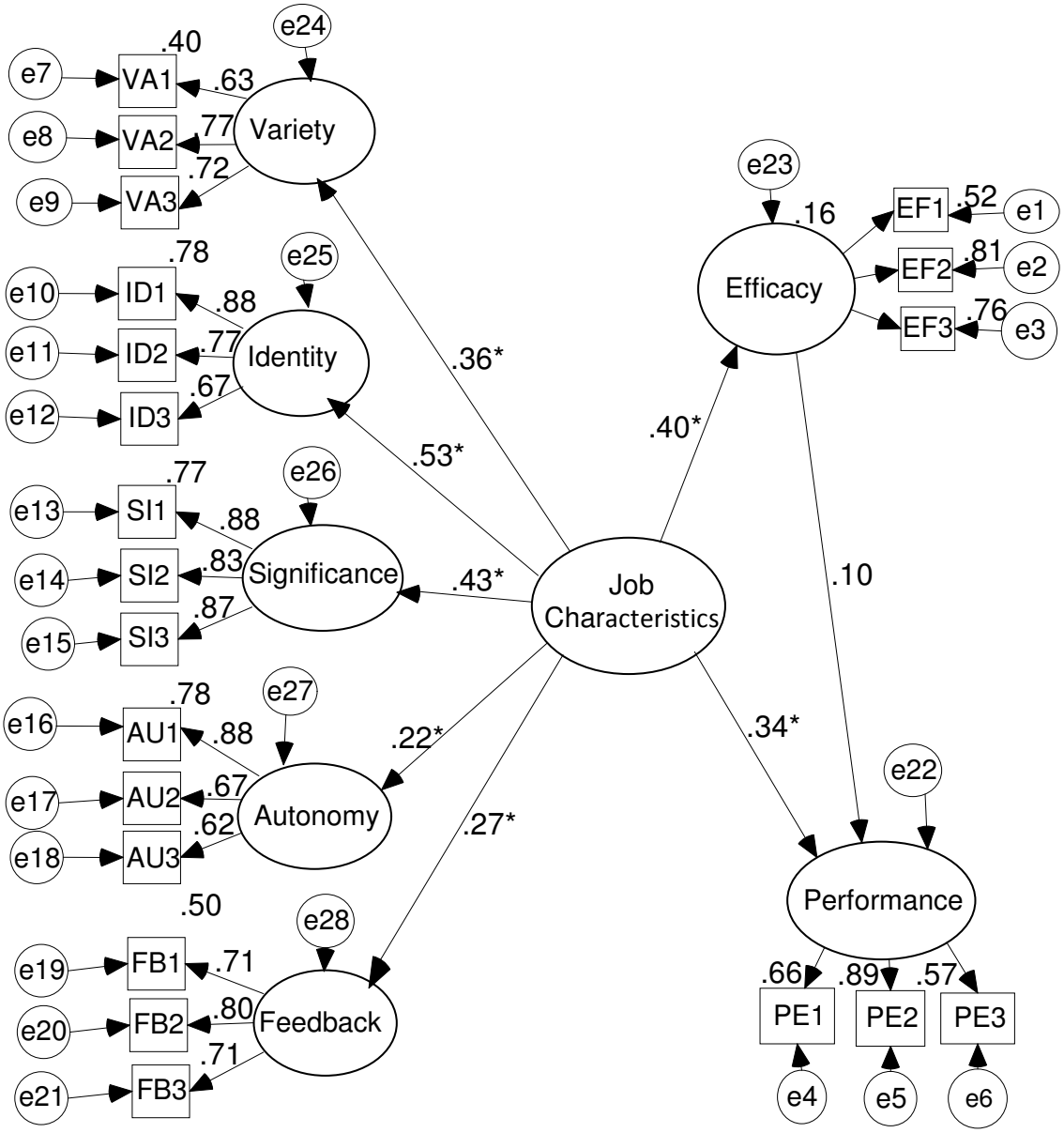
Figure 2: Structural Model with First-order Structure



The results showed that x^2 statistic was significant (x^2 = 210.486; d.f. = 178; $p < 0.05$), and the fit indices were quite good (SRMR = 0.069; GFI = 0.933; AGFI = .912; CFI = 0.983; TLI = .980; RMSEA = 0.026). Additionally, all of the path estimates were nonsignificant except for the path between task significance and self-efficacy (t = 3.423, $p < .001$) and the path between feedback and job performance (t = 4.532, $p < .001$).

Prior literature suggests that the five measures i.e. skill variety, task identity, task autonomy, task significance, and feedback are constituents of job characteristics, thus, all the five measures were loaded onto a single second-order factor (job characteristics). Applying the CFA for the model when entering the job characteristics as a higher–order structure resulted in the structural model depicted in Figure 3:

Figure 3: Structural Model with Job Characteristics as a Higher-order Factor



As shown in Figure 3, all the first-order five factors load very well onto the second-order job characteristics construct. The regression weights are close with each other and range between 0.22 and 0.53, with all t-values above 1.96.

The Chi-square showed better result than the first-order confirmatory factor analysis (x^2 statistics = 209.137; x^2/df = 1.155, Degree of freedom=181, $p > .05$). The other model fit statistics are similar and indicative of a good fit (SRMR = .058; GFI = .935; AGFI = .917; CFI = .985; TLI = .983; RMSEA = .024). The second-order construct was significantly affecting both self-efficacy and job performance ($t = 2.556$, $p < 05$; $t = 1.964$, $p < 05$), supporting H1 and H3. At the same time, first-order measures did not have significant impact neither on job performance nor on self-efficacy except for the path from significance to self-efficacy ($t = 3.423$, $p < 05$) and from feedback to performance ($t = 3.423$, $p < 05$). Furthermore, as the path from self-efficacy to job performance was insignificant ($t = 1.050$, $p > 05$), H2 was not supported.

5. Discussion

This article examined a model of the effects of job characteristics on self-efficacy and job performance. The model tested the hypotheses in the study and found that the second-higher construct, job characteristics, had a significant impact on job performance. Results were consistent with various studies that concluded that there had been a relationship between job characteristics and performance (Marshallecck, 1996; Millette, 2005). Another important finding of this study was that the relationship between the second-higher construct, job characteristics, and self-efficacy was significant. Wang and Netemeyer (2002) perceived job autonomy was proposed to affect self-efficacy. Those who perceive the job as highly autonomous feel they can go about the job basically by themselves without much guidance, resulting in a stronger autonomy-efficacy linkage (Wang and Netemeyer, 2002). How job characteristics construct contributes to self-efficacy has to be determined and this question definitely requires more attention in the future.

Furthermore, the model found that job performance was not significantly related to self-efficacy. That result was consistent with Vancouver and Kendall's (2006) study that found a weak effect of self-efficacy on performance over time using a repeated-measures approach. The result was inconsistent with many studies that suggested an existence of association between self-efficacy and measures of performance (Sheely, 1999; Locke et al, 1984).

Generally speaking, studies have examined the relationship between job characteristics and job performance and between self-efficacy and job performance, but overlooked the potential contribution of job characteristics in self-efficacy. This study supported the significance impact of job characteristics on employee self-efficacy. Thus, it offers useful insights and opens new avenues to conceptualize how job characteristics might influence the employee self-efficacy.

6. Conclusions and Implications

This study had examined the relationships of job characteristics, self-efficacy, and job performance. The results of the analysis supported the hypothesis, indicating that self-efficacy was related to job characteristics (H1) and that job performance was related to job characteristics (H3), and failed to support the relationship between self-efficacy and job performance (H3).

Moreover, this study was expected to add to self-efficacy literature by offering a unique integration of two literatures: self-efficacy and job characteristics. The study findings presented a valuable insight for managers on how to make employees excel their efforts and be good performers. Managers could find in job characteristics a tool to improve individual performance.

The results of this study would provide companies operating in Jordan with useful information on how their practices might affect individual performance level. Other studies could include applying the same research methodology used to examine the relationships between job characteristics, self-efficacy and job performance in other geographical regions. There are two main contributions of this study. First, the development of a model from job characteristics and self-efficacy provides the opportunity for researchers to test other constructs that might affect the job performance. A richer

perspective can be developed by integrating concepts from the business context. Second, this study offers evidence that should help decision-makers to enhance job performance.

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