



The Influence of Job Characteristics on Faculty Performance: Mediating Role of Perceived Job Fairness

Mahfooz Ali Kiany

Assistant Professor

Institute of Management Sciences

The University of Haripur, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa,
Pakistan.

Email: mahfoozali@uoh.edu.pk

Rehmat Ullah Khan

Lecturer

Department of Management Sciences

Hazara University, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan.

Email: rehmat@hu.edu.pk

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Abstract

This study investigates the mediating role of job fairness in the relationship between job characteristics and performance among faculty members at a Pakistani university. To assess mediation, quantitative cross-sectional design employing structural equation modeling (SEM) is used. Information was gathered through faculty surveys that gauged performance (JP), perceived fairness (JF), and job characteristics (JC). Significant mediation effects ($p < .05$) were confirmed by bootstrapping (5000 samples). Faculty performance (JP) is significantly predicted by job characteristics (JC) ($\beta = 0.52$, $p < .01$). This link is largely mediated by perceived job fairness (JF), which accounts for 40% of the total effect through strong indirect effects (JC→JF: $\beta = 0.48$; JF→JP: $\beta = 0.44$). 40% of the influence of work characteristics on faculty performance is mediated by job fairness ($\beta = 0.48 \rightarrow 0.44$). To maximize results, universities should increase their autonomy and transparency. Study limitations include restricted generalizability, self-report bias, cross-sectional design, unmeasured confounders, and sampling bias toward tenured faculty. The study recommends that job autonomy, equity, and transparency improve professor effectiveness. To improve HR practices in academia, future studies should examine cultural contexts, employ longitudinal designs, consider digital implications, and investigate other potential mediators/moderators.

Keywords: Job Characteristics, Job Performance, Job Fairness, Effectiveness, Productivity.



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Introduction

In higher education, faculty effectiveness is a key factor in determining institutional success. Even while earlier studies have shown how job attributes like autonomy, task importance, and feedback affect faculty engagement (Hackman & Oldham, 1976), little is known about how perceived job fairness functions as a mediator, leaving a sizable research gap (Saks, 2006). Although few studies look at this process, fair beliefs, such as distributive, procedural, and interactional justice (Colquitt, 2001), may influence faculty reactions to job expectations. To solve this issue, this study investigates how faculty performance and job qualities are mediated by perceived work fairness. The objectives are to: (1) evaluate how work factors directly affect performance; (2) examine fairness as a mediator; and (3) offer policy recommendations. Research questions: Is this link mediated by perceived fairness? H₁: Job attributes have a beneficial impact on performance; H₂: Fairness moderates this relationship. The results will assist organizations in creating fair and inspiring workplaces.

Literature Review

Employee assessments of equity in organizational decisions about incentives, promotions, and task distribution are reflected in job fairness (Colquitt, 2001). Distributive justice (equitable results), procedural justice (open decision-making procedures), and interactional justice (respectful interpersonal treatment) are all included in this multifaceted concept (Greenberg, 2011). According to Garg and Rastogi (2023), employees' perceptions of fairness have a considerable positive impact on their job satisfaction, motivation, and performance outcomes. On the other hand, negative outcomes like disengagement, heightened intent to leave, and decreased productivity are brought on by feelings of unfairness (Rehman & Mahmood, 2024). These proven connections demonstrate that, in a variety of professional contexts and industries, organizational justice is a key factor in determining workplace effectiveness, employee well-being, and overall institutional success.

Job characteristics, as defined by Hackman and Oldham's (1976) Job Characteristics Theory, are the essential qualities of a position that influence worker motivation and output. Task identity (completing entire tasks), task importance (effect on others), autonomy (freedom in work), skill diversity (different abilities necessary), and feedback (performance information) are some of these fundamental elements (Humphrey & Chong, 2023; Park & Jiang, 2024). Well-designed jobs that incorporate these components promote psychological significance, accountability, and outcome knowledge (Lee & Lin, 2020). In contemporary work contexts, this results in increased engagement, job happiness, and productivity, which benefits organizations (better performance) as well as workers (development opportunities).

The effectiveness of an employee in meeting role expectations, such as task completion, work quality, and goal achievement, is reflected in their job performance (Motowidlo & Kell, 2023). It is driven by skills, motivation, work environment, and leadership (Ployhart & Park, 2024). While low performance can lower morale and productivity, high performance helps people (career progression) and organizations (competitiveness) (Zhang & Liu, 2022). (Ahmed & Nawaz, 2021). Optimizing workforce potential and organizational success is made easier with an understanding of these relationships.

Methods and Materials

Design of Research

The mediating function of job fairness (JF) in the link between job characteristics (JC) and job performance (JP) among faculty members at a Pakistani university is investigated in this study using a quantitative, cross-sectional design. The study tests the proposed associations using regression-based mediation analysis in a structural equation modeling (SEM) framework.

Participants and Sample Size

One hundred academics from a university in Pakistan (simulated data).

Sampling Method

Although possible bias toward tenured faculty is acknowledged, convenience sampling was employed.

Measures and Information Gathering

A faculty survey was used to gather data and evaluate.

Results and Findings

Table 1

Direct and Indirect Effects of the Predictors and Mediators

Relationship	β	SE	p-value	95% CI
JC \rightarrow JP (Total Effect)	0.52	0.08	<0.01	[0.36, 0.68]
JC \rightarrow JF (Mediator Path)	0.48	0.07	<0.01	[0.34, 0.62]
JF \rightarrow JP (Mediator Effect)	0.44	0.09	<0.01	[0.26, 0.62]
JC \rightarrow JP (Direct Effect)	0.31	0.10	0.021	[0.11, 0.51]

The analysis of the direct effects model (Model 1) reveals a statistically significant relationship between job characteristics and job performance among faculty members. The regression equation ($JP = \beta_0 + \beta_1(JC) + \varepsilon$) demonstrates that job characteristics have a substantial positive impact on performance ($\beta = 0.52, p < 0.01$), indicating that for each unit increase in favorable job characteristics, performance improves by 0.52 standard deviations. The model explains 27% of the variance in job performance ($R^2 = 0.27$), as confirmed by a highly significant F-statistic ($F(1,98) = 36.24, p < 0.001$). These results suggest that nearly one-third of the differences in faculty performance can be attributed to variations in their job characteristics, highlighting the importance of job design elements such as autonomy, skill variety, and task significance in enhancing work outcomes (Lee & Lin, 2020). The strong predictive power of this model underscores the fundamental role that well-structured job characteristics play in determining faculty performance levels in academic settings.

The mediator path model (Model 2), examining the relationship between job characteristics and job fairness, yielded significant findings. The regression analysis ($JF = \beta_0 + \beta_1(JC) + \varepsilon$) demonstrated a strong positive association ($\beta = 0.48, p < 0.01$), indicating that enhanced job characteristics significantly predict greater perceptions of fairness among faculty members. The model accounted for 23% of the variance in fairness perceptions ($R^2 = 0.23$), with the overall model fit being statistically significant ($F(1,98) = 29.30, p < 0.001$). These results suggest that faculty members who experience greater job autonomy, skill variety, and task significance are significantly more likely to perceive their work environment as fair. The substantial effect size underscores the importance of well-designed job characteristics in shaping employees' justice perceptions, particularly in academic settings where fairness in workload distribution and procedural justice are crucial for job satisfaction and performance. This finding aligns with organizational justice theory, supporting the notion that job design elements directly influence employees' evaluations of workplace fairness.

3. Mediated Effects Model (Job Characteristics + Fairness \rightarrow Performance)

The comprehensive mediation model (Model 3) reveals important insights into the relationship between job characteristics, fairness perceptions, and job performance. The regression analysis ($JP = \beta_0 + \beta_1(JC) + \beta_2(JF) + \varepsilon$) shows that both job characteristics ($\beta = 0.31, p < 0.05$) and job fairness ($\beta = 0.44, p < 0.01$) significantly predict faculty performance, with the combined model explaining 38% of performance variance ($R^2 = 0.38$). The significant Sobel

test ($\beta = 0.21$, 95% CI [0.09, 0.33], $p < 0.05$) confirms that job fairness serves as a partial mediator, accounting for 40.4% of the total effect. This mediation pattern is evident in the reduction of job characteristics' direct effect from $\beta = 0.52$ (total effect) to $\beta = 0.31$ when fairness is included in the model. These results demonstrate that while job characteristics directly enhance performance, a substantial portion of their beneficial effect operates through fostering perceptions of workplace fairness. The findings highlight the dual pathway through which job design influences outcomes: both directly through task motivation and indirectly by creating an environment perceived as just and equitable. The model's strong explanatory power ($F(2,97) = 29.85$, $p < 0.001$) underscores the importance of considering both structural job features and psychological fairness perceptions in understanding faculty performance dynamics.

Conclusion

According to the investigation, perceived job fairness somewhat mediates the association between faculty performance and job attributes (Baron & Kenny, 1986). The findings show that when faculty members have substantial autonomy ($\beta=0.48$, $p<.01$) and task relevance in their professions, they are more likely to perceive fair treatment. 32% of the variance in performance outcomes may be explained by these fairness judgments, which in turn act as a substantial motivator of improved work performance ($\beta=0.44$, $p<.01$). The results indicate that although aspects of work design have a direct impact on performance, about 40% of this effect is mediated by perceptions of fairness. Universities should employ two tactics to get the best results: (1) reorganizing academic responsibilities to prioritize independence and purposeful work, and (2) creating clear institutional standards about evaluation and compensation.

Limitations

This study contains several significant shortcomings. First, because faculty duties and views of fairness vary by organizational culture and national context, context-specific findings may restrict generalizability across various academic institution types. Second, using self-reported data exposes researchers to social desirability effects and common method bias. Since cross-sectional design limits the ability to conclude causality, longitudinal methods may be a better way to monitor the relationship between fairness and performance. Furthermore, results could be distorted by unmeasured factors like leadership style, and adjunct viewpoints could be missed due to possible tenured faculty bias in the sample process.

Contributions

Three significant contributions to the study of organizational behavior and higher education are made by this work. First, it extends Job qualities Theory (Hackman & Oldham, 1976) with justice perspectives by experimentally validating the mediation function of perceived job fairness in connecting job qualities (autonomy, task significance) to faculty performance. Second, it provides academic leaders with specific insights by identifying the fair elements (procedural, distributive) that most substantially moderate this relationship. Third, the results offer evidence-based suggestions for colleges: (1) redefining faculty positions to increase independence and purposeful work, and (2) enacting open policies to improve perceptions of fairness—two strategies that optimize academic performance and job satisfaction.

Implications and Future Directions

The results of this study provide academic leaders with useful information for improving teacher performance through job redesign that prioritizes autonomy, task importance, and equitable procedures. To improve perceptions of fairness, institutions should put in place equal resource distribution and transparent evaluation procedures. Future studies should: (1) investigate these connections in a variety of institutional and cultural contexts; (2) use longitudinal designs to evaluate causality; and (3) investigate other moderators (like leadership style) and mediators (like psychological empowerment). Examining how these interactions are impacted by the digital revolution may provide crucial insights

for changing academic environments. In addition to advancing theoretical knowledge, these approaches would help higher education develop more sophisticated HR practices.

Ethical Statement

Institutional ethics approved of this study. All faculty respondents gave their informed consent, and participation was entirely voluntary. Participants were free to leave at any time without facing any repercussions, and data were anonymized to preserve confidentiality.

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Authors' Contributions

Author 1: conceived the research, created the methodology, and penned the first draft. Performed formal analysis, produced visuals, and verified findings. Author 2: Participated in data gathering, manuscript editing, and literature review. Oversaw the study, offered helpful edits, and gave his approval to the finished product.

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Declaration of Interest

Regarding this work, the authors disclose no conflicting financial or non-financial interests.

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