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A Review and Proposal of Job Involvement

By

Atsuko Yoshimura

Abstract

This paper presents a multi-dimensional concept of job involvement (JI) and proposes a process model of JI. Recently in Japan, research on JI becomes more important because Japanese employees' work values are getting more individualistic and because that the organizational environment becomes more profit conscious, among other reasons.

Reviewing previous research on JI, it may be pointed out that JI concept needs to be more integrated and multi-dimensional. Thus, three-dimensional JI concept which consists of emotional JI (JIE), cognitive JI (JIC) and behavioral JI (JIB) is presented. In addition, a hypothetical process model of JI is presented to examine the relationships between the three JI subconcepts and the antecedents of JI such as work value, organizational commitment and human resource management.

Key Words

job involvement, human resource management, multi-dimensional concept, locus of control, growth need, work value, socialization, success experience, career stage, participation in decision making, job type, job satisfaction, organizational satisfaction, organizational commitment, family involvement

Introduction

Recently in Japan, the relationship between an organizational member and his/her job has taken on renewed importance due to changes in individuals' characteristics and human resource management practice. The most typical change in individual characteristics is that Japanese employees are getting more individualistic. Several phenomena have appeared. Increasing numbers of people want to work for their own self-actualization, are changing jobs in search of more interesting work, want to be specialists rather than general office workers, and want to work at organizations on a freelance basis rather than with a long-term contract. People who are willing to devote themselves solely to their work and company are decreasing, especially among the younger generation.

There are also several changes in Japanese human resource management caused by the recent low economic growth rate, the future labor shortage because of the declining birth rate, rapid skill obsolescence, and increasing demand for innovative products. Therefore, from both points of views, it becomes more important that an

organizational member could work more voluntarily and actively by his/her own will. So it is necessary to develop the concept which indicates the psychological distance from the individual to his/her job. The purpose of this paper is to review previous research on job involvement (JI) and to present a new conceptual model.

Multi-Dimensional JI Model

This paper presents a multi-dimensional JI model (see Table 1). The concept consists of three dimensions: emotional JI, cognitive JI and behavioral JI. Emotional JI indicates how strongly the worker is interested in his/her job or how much the worker likes his/her job. Cognitive JI indicates how strongly the worker wants to participate in his/her job-related decision making or how important the job is in his/her whole life. And behavioral JI indicates how often the worker usually takes extra-role behavior such as taking an evening class to enhance job-related skills or thinking about the job after leaving the office.

From a review of previous JI research, there is no model that includes emotional, cognitive and behavioral dimensions of JI. Previous JI models can be divided into three categories: (1) the job as central life interest, (2) the job as an important factor for self-esteem and (3) intention to participate in decision making related to his/her job.

Job as the Central Life Interest

This JI definition indicates that JI means the extent that one's job is important as a self-esteem factor. In case that job gives great opportunity to satisfy the worker's need, his/her job is central in his/her life. Lawler and Hall (1970) define JI as the extent to which the individual regards that his/her job is central to his/her ego. Gurin, Veroff and Feld (1960) define JI as the importance of an individual's job for his self expression or self actualization. French and Kahn (1962) described one of the dimensions of JI as the degree of consistency between values and his/her job. According to Lodahl and Kejner (1965), a high JI person recognizes his/her job as very important, and cares about the job itself, job-related human relations and the organization where he works. A high JI person may or may not be satisfied with his job and/or happy at work.

Kanungo (1982) described JI as a cognitive state of unidimensional psychological identification from a motivational approach. Kanungo defined JI as individual's perception or belief that he is identified with his/her job. Kanungo also makes clear the

Table 1. The Multi-Dimensional JI Model

●Emotional JI:	Attachment Interest Liking
●Cognitive JI:	Psychological State Self-esteem Active participation
●Behavioral JI:	Behavioral intention Extra-role behavior Voluntary learning

difference between job and work: a job means an individual's present work, while work means work in general. Similar JI definition of Kanungo were presented by Guion (1958), Dubin (1956, 1968) and Siegel (1969).

Importance of Performance in Self-Esteem

This concept means that JI is the index of how seriously job performance affects individual self-esteem. In other words, if an individual increased his self-esteem by good job performance or decreased it by bad job performance, he could be called a high JI person. This kind of JI concept is presented by French and Kahn (1962), Vroom (1962, 1964) and Lodahl and Kejner (1965).

Active Participation in Job

This concept means JI indicates how actively an individual participates in his/her job. Allport (1943, 1947) described JI as the extent of a worker's participation in his job-related decision making.

Previous research about the JI concept may be criticized on three fronts. First, every JI concept studied in previous research is cognitive. It is clear that emotional and behavioral dimensions of JI were not included by previous JI research. Second, there is no common JI concept which most researchers could use. The one reason is that the referents of JI are various, such as the job itself and job-related human relations (Lodahl and Kejner, 1965) or the general job situation (Lawler and Hall, 1970). For another reason, two different JI dimensionalities exist: multi-dimensional (Lodahl and Kejner, 1965; Saleh and Hosek, 1976) and uni-dimensional (Kanungo, 1982). The multi-dimensional JI concept represented by Lodahl and Kejner did not offer a general JI concept, because the components of the dimensions are not clear (Rabinowitz and Hall, 1977; Blau, 1985). On the other hand, the context validity of uni-dimensionality is doubtful because it is too simplistic to describe JI. This paper presents a hypothetical model which describes the antecedents of JI.

Antecedents of JI

It is helpful to realize how JI has evolved and how the concept has changed over time. The antecedents of JI can be classified into three categories: individual personality variables, organizational variables and non-organizational variables. The effect of each variable on JI is described as follows.

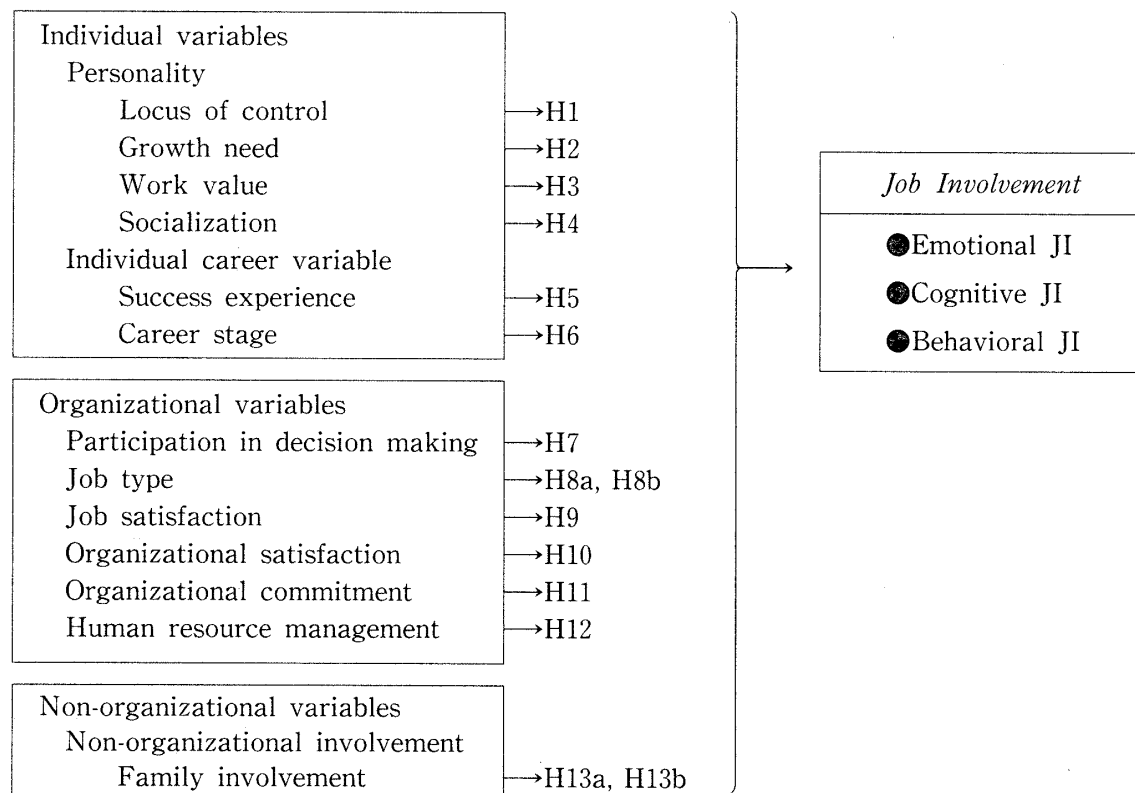
Individual Variables

The individual variables which affect JI are classified as individual personality such as locus of control, growth need, working value and the way of being socialized, and individual career such as career stage and successful job experience.

(a) Personality variables. If JI is correlated with individual internal characteristics and if JI is somewhat stable, a part of one's personality could be related to JI (Runyon, 1973).

H1: A person with an internal locus of control has higher cognitive JI and behavioral JI than a person who has an external locus of control.

A person who has an internal locus of control usually attributes the reason for bad results to his own behavior. So this kind of person, no matter whether receiving a good

Figure 1. Hypothetical Process Model of Job Involvement

result or not, tends to recognize his job results as the consequence of his own efforts or behavior. He may think that the more eagerly he works, the more good results he can get. So a person whose locus of control is internal would recognize his job as very important and would take extra-role behaviors more often than a person whose locus of control is external.

Evans (1971) reported a significant relationship between internal locus of control and JI. Runyon (1973) also reported that a group whose average locus of control is external registers a lower average JI point than a group whose locus of control is internal, regardless of management style.

H2: A person with a strong need for growth has more cognitive JI or behavioral JI than a person who has a weak need for growth.

If a person with a strong growth need judged that he could grow through his job, his job would be very important in his life and he would try to perform very well. Lawler (1973) recognized need for growth as a moderator between job characteristics and JI. If a person with a weak need for growth were given a difficult job, he would feel it too heavy for him to deal with. On the other hand, if a person with a strong need for growth were faced with the same situation, he would find it challenging. So a person with a strong need for growth would increase his motivation or JI, when he had to cope with a difficult job, if his/her job had such characteristics as job autonomy, job identification, job variety and feedback. A few applied studies have reported the relationship between need for growth and JI (Rabinowitz, 1975).

H3: An individual with a strong work ethic has higher cognitive JI than an individual with a weak work ethic.

It has been said that the Protestant work ethic (Hulin and Blood, 1968) affects JI (Lodahl, 1964; Lodahl and Kejner, 1965). Rabinowitz (1975) surveyed Canadian public sector employees and reported a significant correlation between Protestant work ethic and JI ($r = .20$ $p < .001$). It may also affect JI in Japan, because the Japanese work ethic is similar to the Protestant work ethic.

H4: An individual who is convinced that working is a good and important element in his/her total value has more cognitive JI or behavioral JI than an individual who is not convinced of this.

A few researchers thought that part of an individual's JI is formulated by internalization of the work value of the society where he/she has been brought up (Lodahl, 1964; Lodahl and Kejner, 1965; Siegel, 1969). Also, JI is strongly affected by social environment and family situation. Lodahl and Kejner (1965) recognized that it is formulated through the socialization process. Therefore, JI is a somewhat stable variable which does not easily change. Some researchers have recognized that an individual's JI is not much influenced by a change in his/her job design (Lawler, Hackman and Kaufman, 1973) or by heavy organizational stress.

(b) Career variables. As the first step in thinking about the relationship between organizational variables and JI, we should review the relationship between the individual career variable and JI. An individual's successful career experience would enhance behavioral JI. An individual's cognitive JI would fluctuate depending on the career stage.

H5: The more an individual experiences success in his/her job, the more behavioral JI he has.

If an individual has many successful experiences in his/her job, he will perform more actively. In other words, when an individual is rewarded by successful experiences such as promotion, increase in salary or commendation, the successful experiences work as a reinforcement of behavioral JI, and he will work more actively and voluntarily. Argyris (1964) posited that psychological success would enhance an individual's JI and psychological failure would decrease his/her JI. Some researchers have speculated that when an individual reaches a self-set goal, his self-esteem will increase and also enhance JI or work commitment (Hall, 1971; Bray, Campbell and Grant, 1974).

H6: An individual in his middle career stage has higher cognitive JI or behavioral JI than those who are in the early career stage or late career stage.

One proposition put forth is that an individual's JI depends on what career stage he/she is in. At the early career stage, an individual can not understand his job sufficiently yet. And his job content is not yet so rich, so his emotional JI is at a low level. At the middle career stage, an individual can understand his entire job well and his job content becomes so rich that his emotional JI and cognitive JI move to a higher level than before. At the late career stage, an individual's central life interest shifts from his job to his after-retirement life. Job content does not retain its charm for most people at the late career stage, except for a few top managers. So an individual's emotional JI or cognitive JI at the late career stage becomes lower than that of an individual in his middle career stage.

Some empirical research reported a positive correlation between age and JI (Lodahl and Kejner, 1965; Johns, James and Bruni, 1975; Hall and Mansfield, 1975). Age could be a proxy variable for career stage. Rabinowitz and Hall (1981) divided their sample into three sub-samples of those in early, middle and late career stage, and in

each sub-sample examined the correlation between JI and other variables such as job characteristics, human relations at work, job satisfaction and so on. Hall (1976) noted that middle career stage is the time when a worker re-examines his job or career. It is necessary, therefore, that the career stage is considered as a moderator between human resource management and JI.

Organizational Variables

Organizational variables which affect JI are work-related variables such as job type, job characteristics and human resource management and organizational attitude variables such as job satisfaction, organizational satisfaction, and organizational commitment.

(a) Work content. It is likely that job content may strongly affect JI. The relationship of each variable is described as follows.

H7: The more actively an individual participates in decision making about his job, the more emotional JI, cognitive JI or behavioral JI he has.

If an individual had a job which required his active participation in decision making, he would often think about his job and he would recognize it as very important and interesting. So his emotional JI, cognitive JI and behavioral JI will increase to a high level by the active participation in decision making about his job.

March and Simon (1958) indicated the relationship between participation in decision making and JI for the first time. White and Ruh (1973) researched this relationship for workers in the manufacturing industry ($N=2,755$) and found a significant correlation between the two variables, for managers ($r=.44$, $p<.01$) and for employees ($r=.53$, $p<.01$). Siegel and Ruh (1973) also reported a positive correlation between the two variables ($r=.52$).

H8a: Cognitive JI differs depending on the type of job.

H8b: An individual who has a job in which he is interested has more emotional JI than one who does not have that kind of job.

Generally speaking, a person who is in charge of an interesting job has higher emotional JI than those who are in charge of an uninteresting job (Tannenbaum, 1966). If an individual perceives his job as interesting, he will recognize it as very important in his life. So it is likely that an individual whose job requires a high level of specialty or creativity has high emotional JI or cognitive JI.

Mannheim (1975) created a work centrality scale using samples which consisted of people in charge of seven types of jobs ($N=652$). The highest JI group members were those in charge of specific skilled jobs such as scientists, the second group were those in charge of white-collar or blue-collar jobs, and the lowest JI group members were those working in the service industry or recreational industry. Even within the same organization, however, the correlation between JI and job status level (Lodahl and Kejner, 1965) or skill level (Rabinowitz, 1975) is not reported.

(b) Attitudinal variables. Brooke, Russell and Price (1988) showed empirically that job satisfaction, organizational commitment and JI are independent from each other, and that each of these three attitude variables is a distinct concept.

H9: There is a mild correlation between job satisfaction and JI, but job satisfaction is conceptually independent from JI.

Some researchers have reported that JI is correlated with job satisfaction. Lodahl and Kejner (1965) analyzed the correlation between job satisfaction measured by JDI

(Kendall, Smith, Hulin and Locke, 1963) and JI. According to their results, four out of five factors of job satisfaction correlate with JI positively and significantly: job itself ($r=.29$, $p<.01$), promotion ($r=.38$, $p<.01$), supervision ($r=.38$, $p<.01$) and human relations ($r=.29$, $p<.01$). Gechman and Wiener (1975) also reported the relationship between the two variables at $r=.51$, $p<.01$.

Using Herzberg's two factor theory, Weissenberg and Gruenfeld (1968) divided job satisfaction into motivator factors and hygiene factors, and then analyzed the correlations between these job satisfaction factors and JI. Three of these motivator factors such as achievement and responsibility correlate with JI significantly and positively. But the total motivator factor and two other motivator factors (job itself and promotion) do not correlate with JI. Of the hygiene factors, only relationship with boss correlates with JI significantly.

It is clear that the basic concept of JI differs from that of job satisfaction. JI indicates how much you like your job, how important your job is in your life and how often you take on extra role behavior voluntarily. On the other hand, job satisfaction indicates how much you are satisfied given your expectations about your job.

H10: There is a slight correlation between organizational satisfaction and JI, but organizational satisfaction is conceptually independent from JI.

Schwychart and Smith (1972) used two different samples of middle managers and found organizational satisfaction to be correlated positively with JI in each sample ($r=.44$ and $r=.45$, $p<.05$). Lodahl and Kejner (1965) thought that organizational satisfaction consisted of similar factors to those of JI, so these two concepts may be produced by common determinants.

In both of these results, however, it is clear that organizational satisfaction differs from JI conceptually. The results of those studies indicate that the referent of organizational satisfaction is the company where an individual works. In addition, organizational satisfaction indicates how much you are satisfied given your expectations about the company you work for.

H11: Organizational commitment correlates with JI mildly, but these concepts are distinct from each other.

Both organizational commitment and JI are well known as work-related variables (Blau and Boal, 1987, 1989). Some correlations between organizational commitment and JI that have been reported are $r=.55$, $p<.01$ (Brooke et al., 1988) and $r=.31$, $p<.01$ (Blau and Boal, 1989). Blau and Boal (1989), however, found that the factor structure of JI differs from that of organizational commitment. The referent of organizational commitment is the company or organization where an individual works. On the other hand, the referent of JI is an individual's present job. From these two points, it is clear that organizational commitment and JI are distinct from each other. Blau and Boal (1987) divided these two variables into $2 \times 2 = 4$ groups on the assumption that these two variables are independent. Brooke et al. (1988) made it clear empirically that organizational commitment is different from JI. So it is clear that organizational commitment correlates with JI, but JI is distinct and independent from organizational commitment.

H12: The more fair an individual views the performance evaluation process, the more cognitive JI or behavioral JI he has.

It is not hard to think that human resource management could affect organizational members' cognitive, emotional and behavioral JI. In Japan recently,

employees are becoming more independent from the organization than they used to be. Therefore, individual-focused human resource management practices such as a self-report system may be paid more attention to as an antecedent of cognitive JI or behavioral JI.

Yoshimura (1996) approached this issue using equity theory and examined the effects of perceived fairness of the performance evaluation system on emotional, cognitive and behavioral JI. Her results showed that one factor of interactional fairness, "boss," positively affects emotional JI and cognitive JI, and another factor, "voice," positively affects cognitive JI and behavioral JI.

Non-Organizational Variables

Individuals are involved not only in job-related matters but also in matters about their private life. We will examine an individual's involvement with his family, since the family is likely the referent that most people are involved in.

H13a: The more an individual is involved in family life, the lower behavioral JI he has.

Minami, Yoshida, Ura, Ogawa & Shibata (1992) presented a "conflict model" which describes the quantity of an individual's involvement as limited. Therefore, if he is strongly involved in family matters, he can not have strong behavioral JI.

H13b: The more an individual is involved in family life, the higher cognitive JI he has.

Minami et al. (1992) also presented an "instrumental model" which describes a double effect from family involvement and JI. The model posits that if an individual is involved in family life, he can get a feeling of fullness or energy to work from his family, and he will have more cognitive JI in his job.

Conclusion

This kind of research concerning other referents and JI has not been empirically studied. Whether JI is decreased or increased by the effect of other referents is an interesting question for future research. Previous research can be criticized on three points. First, as described in the definition of JI, the JI concept is neither agreed upon nor clear. The JI concept should be developed and measured completely. Second, most previous research has used cross-sectional data. Longitudinal research is necessary to clarify the relationship between JI and its antecedents and consequents. Third, most of the previous research has been designed from an individual point of view. Since most jobs exist within organizations, research that examines the relationship between JI and organizational variables such as human resource management, work design and organizational structure is necessary.

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