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RESEARCH ARTICLE

JOB DESIGN AS A DETERMINANT OF EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE AMONG UNIVERSITY INSTRUCTORS IN SELECTED MIDDLE EAST COUNTRIES

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: The purpose of this paper is to investigate the relationship between three elements of job design based on the job characteristics model (autonomy, task significance, and feedback) and employee performance. More so, the study aimed at determining the highest predictor of employee performance among the three elements investigated in this study. **Design/methodology/approach:** A sample of 420 university lecturers within selected MENA states participated in this study, and SPSS version 21 correlation and regression analyses were used in analysing the data. **Findings:** the results revealed that there is positive and significant relationship between autonomy, task significance, and feedback, and employee performance. In addition, it found that autonomy is the highest predictor of employee performance. **Research limitations/implications:** Even though the job characteristics model comprises of five elements, only three were considered in this study, the findings of this study revealed how employee performance can be elevated through job design elements. **Practical implications:** For the human resource managers of higher institutions to achieve high level of employee performance, they should focus on designing jobs in such a way that employees are given the freedom to make decisions on their own, believe that their jobs have an impact on people within and outside their work environment. More so, higher institutions should employ a system through which the lecturers can be provided with both positive and negative feedback about their performance to motivate them to perform better. **Originality/value:** Several previous studies have investigated job design as a determining factor for employee performance in different contexts, but this study is one of the first to investigate the performance of university lecturers based on the elements of job design, there filling a gap in literature.

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INTRODUCTION

One of the issues which emerging economies are faced with is the quality of education, thereby, making it a global issue (Heyneman, 1997). The event of low quality of education makes it necessary to improve the quality urgently. This author noted that in the Middle East region, there is scarcity of data on the quality of education, but the available data indicates that the quality of education in the region is low, due to the inefficient management of the available resources. The Middle East has witnessed economic, social and technological advancement for many decades, because of the high level of openness and to the creation and sharing of knowledge (Kamel, 2014). This trend of knowledge creation and sharing lasted for five centuries (8th-13th) (Aubert and Reiffers 2003). At that time, the growth of the economy was tied to knowledge, different sectors of the economy felt the contribution and impact made by this

knowledge. Nevertheless, from the 18th to 19th century huge changes began to surface after the industrial revolution. In addition, in the attention given to the creation of knowledge began to reduce, as more attention was given to the exploration of oil in some parts of the region, as well as the development of infrastructure in different sectors such as health and education. This redirection was geared towards the engagement of the Middle Eastern nations with the knowledge society. Aubert and Reiffers (2003) noted that, despite the economic boom and technological advancements that led to this redirection, there has been insufficient investments made in the areas of education, research and development, and innovation in countries of the Middle East, in comparison with other regions, including emerging economies. Kamel (2014) stated that the education sector in the Middle East has been constantly met with different kinds of challenges, regardless of the resources invested into the education sector. Comparatively, a high percentage of the GDP of most countries in the Middle East is channelled to the development of the education sector (Sabry,

2009), with an average of about 5% of GDP and 20% of government expenditure spent on education. The outcomes of this investment vary between countries, but the general outcome is often increased access to education for a larger segment of the community. Nevertheless, the quality of the education remains an issue of concern. This has also been captured in the World Bank Report, which reveals that the Middle Eastern region is suffering from a decline in the quality of education as compared with others, and as such, there is need for urgent actions to be taken towards the reformation of the education sector (Gavlak, 2004). Since education is one of the main drivers of growth and development in the Middle East, more effort is needed to fully support the enjoy from the benefits of the education sector, one of which is economic growth (Holmes, 2008). Particularly, higher education plays critical role in economic and social growth as it offers additional opportunities in terms of development. In addition, higher education is a means through which students and other stakeholders are provided with knowledge, and it serves as an avenue for the promotion of innovation, change and creativity (Wilkins, 2011). Given this critical role of education, especially higher education, it is important to find ways through which the declining quality of education in the Middle East can be improved. One of the top priorities of nations is to improve educational performance, with policymakers and educators directing more efforts at accountability, testing, reformation of curriculum, quality of teachers, and other related issues (Sharma & Jyorti, 2010). Therefore, a major requirement of an educational institution is to attract and retain high quality teachers (Sharma & Jyoti, 2006). The development of quality educators requires understanding the factors associated with it, and job design is one of those factors.

Given the existing problem of decline in quality of education, especially higher education, researchers have focused on solving this problem from a human resource-based approach by investigating human resource related factors as drivers of improved performance of the educational sector. However, other researchers like Heyneman (1997) have investigated the problem from a perspective of efficient management of financial resources. The aforementioned author indicated that the quality of the education sector could be improved through the efficient management of financial resources. Within the context of this study, most of the human resource-based studies have investigated employee performance considering the critical role it plays in enhancing organizational performance. For any sector or organization to function efficiently, it must aim to achieve high level of employee performance, because an efficient workforce is an asset to an organization. For this reason, previous researchers have investigated the factors that influence employee performance given the critical role it plays in enhancing the performance of the education sector. In such studies, the researchers have investigated factors such as job satisfaction, role ambiguity, leadership, and training as factors that determine employee performance in higher education (Iqbal, Baluch, & Abdullah, 2018). Others have focused on studying only job satisfaction of academic staff in higher education, with a focus on private universities (Jawabri, 2014; Sharma & Jyorti, 2010), and others have studied the role of job rotation in enhancing employee performance (Al-Romeedy, 2017), while others have examined the relationship between job design and employee performance among secondary school teachers. Based on the review of literature of employee performance, no study has examined job design as a determinant of employee performance among University

lecturers in the Middle East region. Therefore, this study seeks to bridge the gap that has been identified by studying job design as a determining factor for employee performance among university lecturers. The study also aims at examining job design from a holistic perspective, looking at three elements of job design and their relationships with employee performance. Insights from this study will be of great importance in achieving an efficient and better educational system in the Middle East region. In other to fill the gap that has been identified, this study will adapt the following research questions:

-) What is the relationship between the elements of job design and employee performance among university lecturers?
-) Which of the elements of job design predicts employee performance the most?

Literature Review Employee Performance: Employee performance can be regarded as how efficient employees are in carrying out their responsibilities and duties. The importance of employees cannot be underestimated due to the fact that the achievement of goals and objectives of the organization is assessed based on the performance of its resources. Thus, it is crucial for the performance of employees to be evaluated and maintained regularly (Nafei, 2014). The creation of a set of high performing employees that can meet the expectations of both clients and the management is one of the key goals of leaders in both public and private sectors. To achieve that goal there are several factors that come to play, meaning that the performance of employees can be enhanced by different factors. It is necessary for employees to have the required level of exemplary competency, which is often characterised by skills, behaviours, knowledge, attitude, and ability (Borman, 2004a; Organ, 1997). On the other hand, variables like job design, work facilities, and technology are the contextual or system factors that determine employee performance (Johari et al., 2015; Williams 2002). The personal factors can be viewed as the intrinsic ability and motivations that lie within individuals and these factors are primarily determined by an individual's criteria. Meanwhile, the system or contextual factors are the job aspects provided by the organization, which influence the performance of individual employees such as organizational culture, work environment, job design, and organizational (Johari et al., 2015; Williams, 2002). In this study, the focus is on job design, which is one of the contextual factors. This study focuses on investigating how employee performance is influenced by three elements of job design (job autonomy, task significance, and feedback).

Job Design: In every organization, human resource is regarded as the most essential resource as compared with other resources like land and machine and material. Within the context of an organization, job design is a factor that influences the effectiveness of human resource, and as such, jobs must be designed based on the characteristics and capabilities of humans. More so, it is considered as the most crucial function of human resource management. The job design involves the duties, activities and tasks that must be carried out by the workers to create value and maximize performance (Morgeson & Humphrey 2008). Researchers have noted that job control, job demands, role clarity, skill use, job control, employment security, support and social contract are the most modern topologies of job design (Cousins et al., 2004; Warr, 2007). All these play critical roles in the performance of employees. Job

design has been defined as the process of organizing duties, tasks and responsibilities to form an organizational unit of work (Opatha, 2002). Similarly, Aroosiya and Ali (2014) defined job design as the manner in which the methods contents and relationships jobs are organized for the achievement of organizational objectives and goals. For the purpose of this study, the later definition is adopted as the working definition of job design. Job design can be achieved through a wide variety of approaches. To this end, Aswathappa (2006) has highlighted the different approaches of job design, which are; Job Enrichment, Job Rotation, Job Enlargement, Job Engineering, and all these approaches are comprised of different elements. This study applies the job characteristics model proposed by Hackman and Oldham (1976) in studying job design. The job characteristics model identifies five core elements (autonomy, task significance, task identity, task feedback, and skill variety). However, in this study three elements of job design (autonomy, task significance, and job feedback) are investigated.

Job Autonomy and Employee Performance: The recent changes in the nature of work has led to a relative increase in the interest in job autonomy (Oldham & Hackman, 2010; Spreitzer et al., 2017; Wegman et al., 2018). According to Hermerling et al (2018), organizations that desire to take advantage of the expertise of employees and technological advancement must allow their employees to exercise a great level of freedom over their jobs. Sadly, the work of employees is strictly monitored and controlled by managers, thereby allowing them little or no autonomy (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2003), perhaps because of their doubt for the role which job autonomy plays in enhancing employee performance (Kubicek et al., 2017). Job autonomy as defined by Hackman & Oldham (1976) involves exercising power, authority and decision-making by employee within a control of his/her own. Emphasizing on decision-making, other authors have noted that job autonomy gives employees the opportunity to make decisions towards their tasks (Kim et al., 2009; Sisodia & Das, 2013). In addition to the extant definitions of job autonomy, Wu et al., (2015) defined the concept from a different perspective, which allows employees to control their activities and achieve work-related targets based on their personal understanding. It is important to note that the management of an organization is responsible for incorporating job autonomy into organisational environment.

For a long time now, job autonomy has been given great relevance in the area of job design research (Hackman & Lawler, 1971), thereby resulting in a robust literature (Muecke & Iseke, 2019). Findings of previous studies have shown that job autonomy and employee performance are positively correlated (e.g., Humphrey et al., 2007), whereas, some have found negative relationship (Cheong et al., 2016). This has led to inconsistency of findings on the influence of job autonomy on employee performance. The persistent doubt and inconsistency of findings necessitates a better insight on the relationship between job autonomy and employee performance. Hence, in this study, the relationship between job autonomy and employee performance is investigated. Findings of previous studies have shown that job autonomy is positively related to employee performance. For example, in the research conducted by Leach et al., (2005), it was found that job autonomy influences employee performance positively when factors like ability, knowledge and skills are considered. However, in the absence of skills, knowledge and abilities, the influence of job

autonomy on employee performance was minimal. Despite the benefits of job autonomy, some researchers have highlighted the lows of job autonomy stating that acts that are unhealthy to the organization may stem from excessive job autonomy (Lu et al., 2017). Based on the discussion above, the following hypothesis is stated:

Hypothesis 1 (H1): Job autonomy is positively correlated with employee performance

Task Significance and Employee Performance

Task significance is defined as the degree to which an individual's job is believed to have an impact on the well-being of other people within and outside the organization. It has been proposed that high level of job performance can be achieved as a result of task significance. Some authors have defined task significance based on the idea of meaningfulness, stating that as a job that is perceived by employees as valuable and worthwhile (Steger, Dik, & Duffy, 2012). The relationship between task significance and job performance has for long been a subject of debate in the literature of human resource management. In this regard, researchers have debated on how perceptions of task significance can enhance job performance, and that other people can be positively an individual's job (Morgeson & Humphrey, 2006). In recent times, the role of task significance is becoming more prominent due to the fact that employees are becoming more concerned about engaging in a job that is beneficial to both individuals and the society (Colby, Sippola, & Phelps, 2001). However, despite of the fact that it is assumed that job performance is enhanced by task significance, previous works have not shown a clear causal relationship between task significance and job performance (Grant, 2008). For this reason, Grant (2008) conducted an experimental study in order to establish the causal relationship between task significance and employee performance. Findings of his experimental study revealed that task significance leads to higher level of employee performance.

In the study conducted by Allan et al. (2016), it was found that there was a significant and positive relationship between task significance and job performance. Similarly, Julaei and Madiye (2015) examined the relationship between job characteristics from a holistic perspective. For task significance, they found that it was strongly and directly related to employee performance. On the other hand, despite the empirical evidence provided by some researchers on the strong and significant correlation between task significance and job performance, the literature on job design has also shown that the relationship between the two variables is weak (e.g, Humphrey, Nahrgang, & Morgeson, 2007). This means that there is no consensus on the correlation between the two variables. Thus, the current study focuses on examining the relationship between task significance and employee performance. Given the above argument, the following hypothesis is stated:

Hypothesis 2 (H1): Task significance is positively correlated with employee performance.

Task Performance Feedback and Employee performance

Task feedback has been defined in the job characteristics model as "the degree to which carrying out the work activities required by the job provides the individual with direct and clear information about the effectiveness of his or her

performance”. Researchers have highlighted the significance of task performance feedback in enhancing the performance of employees. Park and Choi (2020) noted that employees benefit from a clear communication of the organizational goals and expectations of employees, which are related to the enhancement of organizational efficiency and individual performance. Task Performance feedback is one of the strategies adopted by management to improve the performance of employees, because it helps employees to know if their performance is as expected by their employer or not. This feedback can help them in improving their performance, in an event that it is below expectation. Scholars such as Neilsen (2004), Ashford et al. (2003) have underlined the critical role of supervisor-subordinate relations, stating that sharing of performance information and providing employees with clear details on organizational goals and expected behaviours of employees can help in increasing the performance of employees.

(Gonzalez-Mulé (2018) has defined Performance feedback as “information about the actual performance or actions of a system used to control the future actions of a system”. Some of the benefits of performance feedback include, flexibility, and cost-effectiveness, as well as emphasis on positive outcomes, and managements of organizations employ it as a strategy of improving performance (Prue & Fairbank, 1981). These authors noted that, this strategy works by using aversive control procedures by depending more on positive outcomes. There are different ways through which task performance feedback can be provided; in a negative or positive way. Researchers have used these two methods of providing performance feedback to evaluate the effectiveness of feedback (Choi et al., 2018; Zheng et al., 2015). Positive task performance feedbacks involve expression of favourable appreciation or comments by supervisors to subordinates by sharing information about performance, while negative feedbacks are unfavourable information regarding performance or criticism by supervisors (Zheng et al., 2015). The effects of positive performance feedbacks on subordinates could be motivating and reinforcing, thereby boosting the performance of the individuals receiving the feedbacks. On the other hand, the effects of negative performance of feedbacks on employees can be psychologically negative, leading to feeling of low level of self-efficacy and frustration efficacy (Choi et al., 2018). Findings of empirical studies have constantly shown that individual performance can be boosted using positive performance feedbacks (Park & Choi, 2020; Su et al., 2019). On the other hand, there is inconsistency in the findings of the effectiveness of negative performance feedbacks on employee performance.

Some researchers (e.g., Chun & Rainey, 2005; Pandey & Wright, 2006) have noted that through performance feedback, the adverse effects of high goal ambiguity on the performance of employees can be alleviated by helping employees to concentrate on achieving selected goals of the organizations. The relationship between supervisory task feedback and employee performance is well established in the literature of human resource management, with several empirical evidences. For example, the findings of a study conducted by Park and Choi (2020) showed that feedback is directly and positively correlated to individual performance of the employees. Their findings suggested that the performance of the employees was enhanced by more frequent feedback on their performance. In addition, they found that employees who

had greater opportunities to meet their supervisor and communicate about expected performance and performance goals attained higher evaluation rating. Similarly, the findings of the study conducted by Su et al. (2019) among 327 employees of a high-tech company showed that there is a positive relationship between supervisor feedback and employee performance. Based on the findings of their study, they suggested that managers and supervisors can enhance the performance of their employees through supervisory feedback. Based on the above discussion, the following hypothesis is stated:

Hypothesis 3 (H1): There is a positive relationship between feedback and employee performance.

The conceptual framework for this study is provided in Figure 1 below. The conceptual framework has been presented based on the review of literature on job design elements.

Conceptual Framework

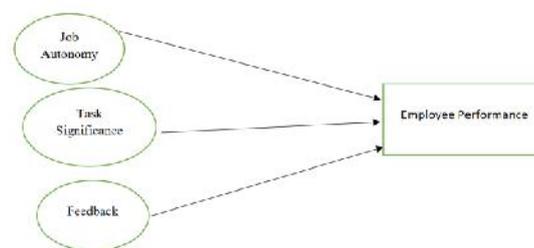


Figure 1

METHODOLOGY

In this study, the quantitative research approach was used in collecting and analysing the data for this study. The data were collected by the questionnaire. The sample size of the study was drawn from five selected universities from five MENA member states, including Egypt, Qatar, Iraq, UAE, and Jordan. A total number of 600 university lecturers were invited through emails to participate in the study, but only, 455 responded to the invitation. The questionnaires were administered using a computer aided distribution method (Google survey forms) and the links were sent to the email of the participants. Out of the 455, only 420 were completely filled, thereby resulting in a response rate of 92.3%. The questionnaire used in this study consisted of items that were used in measuring task autonomy, task significance, task performance feedback, and employee performance. Autonomy, task significance, and job performance feedback in this study were adopted from the Work Design Questionnaire proposed by Morgeson and Humphery (2006). Each of the variables is made up of 3 items, making 9 items which were measured on 5-point Likert scale (5= strongly agree – 1=strongly disagree). Examples of the questions under the three dimensions include “The job gives me the chance to use my personal initiative or judgement in carrying the job”, the results of my significant affects the lives of people around me”, and “The job itself very often provides feedback on my performance”. In this work, the employee performance was measured using the Individual Work Performance Questionnaire proposed by Koopmans in 2015. This instrument contains 18 items measuring three dimensions of job performance, namely, counterproductive work

behaviour, contextual performance, and task performance. The original instrument uses a 4-point rating scale, but this instrument has been adapted in this study, and as such, a 5-point rating scale has been used (5= strongly agree, 4 =agree, 3= somewhat agree, 2 =disagree, 1 =strongly disagree). An example of the question on this scale include “I am able to carry out my work efficiently”.

RESULTS

Demographic profiles of respondents: The sample comprised of 56.9 % male and 43.1% female. More than half of the respondents, i.e. 61.9% were within the age range of 25yrs-41yrs, whereas 38.1% were above 41 years. For the level of (Assist prof, Associate prof and Prof) 68.1 % of them were holding these ranks, while the remaining 31.9 % fell under the categories of the other ranks. A total of 82.9% of the respondents had worked in the universities for over 10 years, while the remaining 17.1% had worked for less than 10 years. Finally, 15.5% of the respondents were instructors in the field of Arts, 46.4% were in the field of social sciences, and the remaining 38.1% were in the field of Science. Table I below shows the demographic profile of respondents.

Table I. Respondents Profile

Item	Category	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	239	56.9
	Female	181	43.1
Age	25-30	48	11.5
	31-36	85	20.2
	36-41	127	30.2
	41 above	160	38.1
Position	Graduate Assist	14	3.3
	Teaching Assist.	35	8.3
	Lecturer	85	20.2
	Assist. Prof	162	38.6
	Assoc. Prof.	110	26.2
Years of Working	Professor	14	3.3
	<5 years	19	4.5
	6-10 years	52	12.4
	11-15 years	154	36.7
Field	15 years above	194	46.4
	Arts & Human.Social	65	15.5
	Sciences	195	46.5
	Sciences	160	38.1

More so, the reliability of the instrument was determined for all variables through the use of Cronbach’s alpha. The results of reliability test showed that all the alpha values for the Cronbach analysis were satisfactory ranging from 0.712 to 0.913. Particularly, a Cronbach’s alpha coefficient of 0.913 was achieved for employee performance, job autonomy (0.712), task significance (0.796), and task performance feedback (0.800). Conclusively, all the Cronbach’s alpha coefficient obtained for the study variables are satisfactory as recommended by Pallant (2007). In this study, the relationship between three elements of job design (job autonomy, task significance, and task performance feedback, and employee performance has been determined using Pearson’s Correlation analysis on SPSS version 21. The results showed that there is a direct and positive relationship between the three elements (job autonomy, task significance, and job performance feedback) and employee performance. The results showed that all the hypotheses of the study are supported. In particular, H1 which states that there is a positive relationship between job autonomy and employee performance is confirmed ($r=.758, p < .001$). Also, the findings revealed that task significance and employee

performance are positively and significantly related ($r=.549, p < .001$), thus, H2 is accepted. Lastly, H3 which states that there is a positive relationship between task performance feedback and employee performance is confirmed ($r=.464, p < .001$). The results for the correlation analysis are presented in table II below. The results of the analysis implies that as the job autonomy, task significance, and job performance feedback increase, employee performance increases.

Table II. Pearson Correlations

	1	2	3	4
1. Employee Performance	-			
2. Job autonomy	.758**	-	.688**	
3. Task Significance	.549**			
4. Job Performance Feedback	.464**		.491**	.799**

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Table III. Summary of Model

Model	R	Model Summary		
		R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.767 ^a	.588	.585	6.09743

a. Predictors: (Constant), Feedback, Job autonomy, Task significance

Table VI

ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	22109.332	3	7369.777	198.226	.000 ^b
	Residual	15466.325	416	37.179		
	Total	37575.657	419			

a. Dependent Variable: Score employee performance

b. Predictors: (Constant), Feedback, Job autonomy, Task significance

Table V

Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	27.636	1.965		14.066	.000
	Job autonomy	3.171	.187	.738	16.939	.000
	Task significance	-.348	.213	-.099	-1.635	.103
	Feedback	.706	.199	.179	3.553	.000

a. Dependent Variable: employee performance

The second objective of this study was to determine the most predicting factor for employee performance, i.e., among the elements of job design (Job autonomy, task significance, and job performance feedback). Multiple Regression analysis was performed in order to determine the most predicting factors. The results revealed that 58.8% of the variance in employee performance could be predicted by job autonomy, task significance, and job performance feedback. More so, the independent variables statistically significantly predicted employee performance, $F(3, 416) = 198.226, p < .0005, R^2 = .588$. All three variables contributed statistically significantly to the prediction of employee performance, $p < .05$. Even though the findings revealed that all the independent variables statistically significantly predict employee performance, the results also revealed that job autonomy is the highest contributing (.738) predictor to employee performance in the case of this study. The tables for the regression analysis are presented in Table III, IV, and V, respectively.

DISCUSSION

In previous studies, researchers have studied the relationship between a variety of factors and employee performance, especially personal factors such as knowledge, skills and abilities (Borman, 2004a; Organ, 1997). However, this study focused on studying the relationship between the elements of job design which are regarded as contextual factors (Johari et al., 2015), putting three elements into consideration as predictors of employee performance among university lecturers. It is well-established in the literature that through job design, employees are provided with the opportunity to make use of their individual talents and skills to carry out their duties (e.g., Chang & Lee, 2006; Mierlo et al., 2007; Panatik et al., 2009; Pollock et al., 2000; Rentsch & Steel, 1996; Schneider, 2003). According to these authors, when a job is well designed, it enables positive attitudinal outcomes and better performance at the workplace. In addition, some studies have shown how that the different elements of job design can positively contribute to employee performance (Julaei & Madiye, 2015; Park & Choi, 2020; Humphery et al., (2007). The findings of the present study are similar to the findings of such previous studies, and this means that tertiary institutions can focus more on job autonomy, task significance, and feedback in order to promote higher levels of employee performance. Based on the findings of this study, which showed that there is a positive and significant relationship between autonomy and employee performance, the management of organizations, especially tertiary institutions can leverage the benefits offered by job autonomy to achieve high level of employee performance. It is crucial that employees be given the freedom to make decisions on their own regarding their work activities. Employees should be able to take decisions without the complete control of the management as it helps them in becoming more efficient. This means that the top management must be able to design jobs in a manner that allows employees to participate in decision-making towards the achievement of organizational goals. The job characteristics theory posits that employees cannot be successful at their places of work if they do not have enough freedom of self-decision (Gomez-Mejia et al., 2007; Hackman & Oldham, 1975). The findings of this study in terms of autonomy and job performance, provides evidence for this proposition.

Secondly, in terms of tasks significance, organizations, especially tertiary institutions should ensure that the jobs are designed in a way that employees feel that the jobs that they are doing have an impact on people around them. This is particularly important for the lecturers who are saddled with the responsibility of affecting students through teaching and research, and their communities through community services (Antonio et al., 2000). Hackman and Oldham (1975) noted that the psychological states of employees are positively influenced if they feel that the jobs they do are worthwhile, valuable, and relevant to the values of the system in which they operate. Thirdly, the findings also showed that feedback is significantly and positively correlated with employee performance. This finding supports the propositions made by scholars who noted that feedback is a crucial determinant of employee performance, as it helps in creating knowledge of outcomes of the job done by employees (Gomez-Mejia et al., 2007; Hackman & Oldham, 1975; Hackman & Lawler, 1971). According to these authors, when employees know about their performance, they can choose to act differently with the aim of achieving higher level of performance (Gomez-Mejia et al.,

2007; Hackman & Lawler, 1971; Hackman & Oldham, 1975; Hackman & Oldham, 1980). The implication of this finding is that, institutions need to prioritize job performance feedback so that employees, especially those whose performance is low, can attain a higher level of performance. Particularly, the use of positive feedback can be employed since negative feedback has an adverse effect on the psychology of employees. Basically, jobs that provide enough feedback will give employees the opportunity to upgrade the quality of their work, because it provides them with the necessary information. Generally, the findings of this study have provided more evidence to support the Job characteristics model. In a meta-analysis done by Fried and Ferris (1987) involving the Job Characteristics Model, they found that the different dimensions of JCM were supported by many studies. They also found that there was a relationship between job characteristics and behavioural outcomes.

Implications for Research and Practice: The propositions made in this study comprise of the relationships between three factors of JCM (autonomy, tasksignificance, and feedback) and the performance of university lecturers. Based on the findings of the study, it canbe concluded that tertiary institutions within the MENA states should provide lecturers with such opportunities so that the quality of their performance can be enhanced. Future research can benefit from this research through several ways. First, the findings will contribute to the theory building in terms of the factors that influence employee performance. Ultimately, this research offers a theoretical implication by providing additional empirical evidence within the domain of Job Characteristics Theory. The findings of the study indicate that autonomy, task significance, feedback are critical in terms of elevating employee performance among university lecturers. Second, more areas of future research could possibly emerge from the investigation of the relationship between autonomy, task significance, and job performance feedback. Particularly, researchers should direct their research efforts towards measuring employee performance of academic and non-academic staff and then compare the results so as to better understand the factors that are responsible for employee performance in different contexts. Fourthly, the findings of this study could be of great benefits to academic researchers as they can be used in broadening the horizon of human resource management students or students of organizational management. Lastly, about practical implications, HR of tertiary institutions should focus more on designing a type of job that is more fulfilling and enriching that is characterized by job autonomy, task significance, and feedback. This could be a useful basis for HR practitioners in the education sector so as to elevate the job performance of teachers, especially university lecturers. Knowledge on the relationships between the elements of job design and employee performance can provide the management of organizations in the education sector with strategies of how to achieve high levels of employee performance, which can in turn enable the delivery of quality teaching services, and other related tasks in the education sector. Through the research agenda proposed in this study, practitioners and researchers can be provided with valuable insight and strategies on how to boost the performance of employees.

Conclusion

The aim of this study was to investigate the relationship between three elements of job design (autonomy, task

significance and feedback) and employee performance. More so, in this study, the most predicting factor of employee performance among the three elements was determined. Findings of the study showed that three elements of job design investigated in this study are positively and significantly correlated. However, among the three elements it was found that job autonomy is the highest predictor of employee performance.

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