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Project Manager Motivation: Job Motivators and Maintenance Factors

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ABSTRACT

The present study explored the applicable motivation factors that contribute to job satisfactory in terms of job motivators and maintenance factors when working projects. Students enrolled in a university advanced project management leadership course were asked to respond to a job motivators and maintenance factors self-assessment which is a useful framework to determine the factors that contribute to their motivation when working projects (Lusser & Achua, 2016). A chi-square test was conducted to determine if the observed values were significantly different from an expected value of 18. The chi-square goodness of fit test led to the rejection of $H1_0$ and the acceptance of $H1_{a.}$ with a $p<.001$. Additionally, the chi-square goodness of fit test led to the acceptance of $H2_0$ and the rejection of $H2_{a.}$ with a $p=.994$. The self-assessment revealed the students tended to exhibit higher motivator scores, and lower maintenance scores. The findings of this study have significant implications for leadership behavior when leading project teams. These findings can also contribute to better understanding of the motivation factors which characterize team members for the completion of successful projects.

INTRODUCTION

What motivates project managers and project team members? Is it simply money? Are they motivated by company benefits, status, achievement, affiliation or advancement? These are all good questions for a project manager to answer if he or she is going to be effective in motivating the team members for project success. Project team members' motivation affects productivity, so a large part of a project manager leadership's responsibility is to channel the team towards the successful accomplishment of the project in terms of the triple constraints of scope, time, and cost which should be accomplished in a quality manner (PmBOK, 2013). A project manager may have the necessary technical skills for managing a project; however, throughout the life cycle of a project, he or she is responsible for motivating the project team from project stage to stage for a successful project completion (Schmid & Adams, 2008; Arora & Baronikian, 2013). It begs the question: "What factors motivate project managers and project team members?"

One way a project manager can motivate the project team members is by providing several extrinsic rewards which can include such incentives as outstanding employee awards, bonuses, and merit pay for performance, to name just a few. However, not all project managers have the power to use all these extrinsic rewards, especially if they are managing projects in a functional or weak matrix organizational structure (Larson & Gray, 2011). Therefore, it behooves project managers to study the concept of motivation in order to know what motivates project team members to initiate action, and what can be done to ensure these team members perform in an outstanding manner which will lead to superior project completion that satisfies the customer.

In the 1960s, Frederick Herzberg published his popular two-factor theory needs theory. He interviewed hundreds of employees with the question: When were you highly motivated to work, and when were you very dissatisfied and not motivated to work? (Daft, 2014). He combined Maslow's Hierarchy lower-level needs into one classification he called *hygiene* factors (Arora & Baronikian, 2013). The hygiene factors also are referred to as *extrinsic motivators* because motivation comes from outside the person and from the job itself. They include working conditions, pay, job security, and title, company policies, and interpersonal relationships (Lussier & Achua, 2016). These factors are related to meeting Maslow's Hierarchy lower-level needs such as physiological needs, safety needs, and self-actualization (Arora & Baronikian, 2013).

Herzberg (1968) referred to Maslow's Hierarchy higher-level needs into a classification labeled *motivators factors* which also can be referred to as *intrinsic motivators* which derive from within the employee through the work itself (Arora & Baronikian, 2013). Intrinsic motivators include achievement, recognition, responsibility, work itself, challenge, and personal growth (Daft, 2014). These factors are related to meeting Maslow's Hierarchy (1943) higher-level needs of esteem needs and self-actuation, and are better suited at motivating employees than extrinsic factors (Arora & Baronikian, 2013).

Based on their research, Herzberg (1968) and associates disagreed with the traditional view that satisfaction and dissatisfaction were at opposite ends of one continuum (a one-dimensional model). They submitted that there are two continuums: one that is associated with being not dissatisfied with the environment (maintenance) to being dissatisfied, and one associated with satisfaction with the job itself (motivators) to not being satisfied with the job itself (a two-dimensional model). Herzberg (1968) asserts that organizations providing maintenance factors will keep employees from being dissatisfied, but it will not make them satisfied or motivate them with their work.

Under the old management concept, money served as an extrinsic motivator and was considered the best motivator to get employees to work harder. Money does matter more to some people than others, and may motivate some employees but not all employees. However, money does not necessarily motivate employees to work harder. Under the new leadership paradigm, pay is important, but it is not the best motivator; intrinsic motivators are. Herzberg fits the new paradigm: He says that managers must first ensure that the employees' level of pay and other maintenance factors are adequate. Once employees are not dissatisfied with their pay (and other maintenance factors), they can be motivated through their jobs (Lussier & Achua, 2016). Herzberg (2003) also developed *job enrichment*, which involves the process of building motivators into the job itself by making it more interesting and challenging.

In a quest to understand employee motivation, a study conducted by Dr. Kenneth Kovach (1999), a professor of management at George Mason University, 1,000 employees and 100 of their supervisors were asked to list the things that they believe motivate employees. Results showed that there was no overlap at the top of the two lists. Supervisors listed that employees would be motivated by extrinsic motivators such as good wages and job security. Conversely, employees listed intrinsic motivation factors such as participating in interesting work, feeling appreciated at work and being "in on" things. The employees ranked extrinsic motivators such as job security and good wages as important but lower on the list (Kovach, 1999).

Table 1. *Motivating Employees*

Associates' Ranking	Items	Employers' Ranking
1	Interesting work	5
2	Appreciation of work	8
3	Feeling "in on things"	10
4	Job security	2
5	Good wages	1
6	Promotion/growth	3
7	Good working conditions	4
8	Personal loyalty	6
9	Tactful discipline	7
10	Sympathetic help with problems	9
Source: Kovach, 1999.		

It is interesting to note that after all the motivation research, studies, and discussions by motivation theorists such as Abraham Maslow (1943) and Fredrick Herzberg (1968), that the supervisors still rated good wages and security as #1 and #2 for employees. It seems that these supervisors were, as McGregor (1960) stated, Theory X managers who

believe that "employees seek security above all else" instead of Theory Y managers who believe that "employees' commitment to objectives is a function of the rewards associated with employees' achievement" (Daft, 2014). Most managers may not argue that wages and security are extremely important, but the employees in the Kovach (1999) study rated interesting work and feeling appreciated as most important. What can be learned from Kovach's study (1999) and analyzing motivation for project managers when leading a team? The hope is to capitalize on information such as the Kovach (1999) research study and assist in answering what factors motivate team members for project success completion. To answer this question, let us first take at what employees identified in Kovach's study as being their # 2 ranking: appreciation of their work (Kovach, 1999). Project managers can encourage team members by showing appreciation and encouragement, both of which come in a variety of forms.

It is important to motivate project team members to superior performance levels and the higher level of Maslow's Hierarchy labeled *motivators factors,* which also can be referred to as *intrinsic motivators,* components that form within the employee through the work itself. To do so, it is central to first purge any dissatisfaction they are experiencing, and then support them toward achieving satisfaction. Relying on Herzberg's theory, the project manager should focus particularly on motivation (satisfaction) factors such as those that employees rated # 1 on Kovach's study (interesting work), and concentrate less on hygiene factors (Arora & Baronikian, 2013). The classical motivation content theorists would add other factors such as authority, responsibility, autonomy, power, and status, along with meaningful and challenging jobs (Daft, 2014). In summary, an essential principle for successfully motivating project team members, is for the project manager show leadership by example and be motivated, committed and enthusiastic about the project and concentrate more on what Herzberg lists as motivating factors and less on hygiene factors (Arora & Baronikian, 2013).

RESEARCH QUESTION

The preceding review of motivation research concerning project manager and project team motivation should provide a basis for the factors that motivate project managers and project team members to ensure the success of a project. The current study specifically focuses on the perceptions of students attending an advanced project leadership course regarding motivation in a project setting and attempts to shed light onto the following question:

1. Do students enrolled in an advanced project management leadership course report job motivators or maintenance factors as their primary motivation when working projects?

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this present research study was to assess the overall alignment of self-assessment survey results of project management students as a means of discovering insight to the factors that motivate them on the job by evaluating survey results.

HYPOTHESES

$H1_0$: Students enrolled in an advanced project management leadership course do not exhibit job motivators as their primary motivator as indicated by their leadership self-assessment scores.

$H1_a$: Students enrolled in an advanced project management leadership course do exhibit job motivators as their primary motivator as indicated by their leadership self-assessment scores.

$H2_0$: Students enrolled in an advanced project management leadership course do not exhibit motivation maintenance factors as their primary motivator as indicated by their leadership self-assessment scores.

$H2_a$: Students enrolled in an advanced project management leadership course do exhibit motivation maintenance factors as their primary motivator as indicated by their leadership self-assessment scores.

METHODOLOGY

Thus, we began our consideration of project management students' factors that motivate them on the job with the following research question:

1)Do students enrolled in an advanced project management leadership course report Job Motivators or Motivation Maintenance Factors as their primary motivator when working projects?

To find the answers for this question, a comprehensive literature review was completed followed by research hypotheses. After a descriptive analysis, a chi-square analysis was completed and results produced.

Data Collection

Students enrolled in an advanced project management leadership course were requested to complete a job motivators and maintenance factors self-assessment which is a useful framework to determine the factors that contribute to their motivation when working projects. The student responses were tabulated to determine their preferred motivation factors.

Sample Characteristics

Students working in various industries and organizations internationally and across the United States, to include U.S. military members, responded to the survey; in total, 189 students answered the self-assessment survey which could be considered a substantial sample of the overall population. The self-assessment consisted of 12 job factors questions contribute to job satisfaction (Lussier, & Achua, 2016). Respondents' privacy and confidentiality were strictly protected.

ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

The Job Motivators and Maintenance Factors Style Self-Assessment (Lussier, & Achua, 2016) which is a useful framework for evaluating motivation factors, revealed the students tended to have higher Job Motivators scores than Maintenance Factors scores. As a first step in evaluating the hypotheses, the descriptive statistics of the results of the student assessment were collected and evaluated.

Descriptive Statistics

From inspection of the descriptive statistics in Table 2, it is evident that the mean is greater than the midpoint (a score of 18), and the most common score (mode) was 24.

Table 2. *Job Motivators Data Analysis responses*

	Job Motivators
Mean	25.53
Standard Error	0.21
Median	26.00
Mode	24.00
Standard Deviation	2.86
Minimum	3.00
Maximum	30.00
Count	187.00

Frequency Analysis-Job Motivators

The overall distribution of scores is provided in the frequency analysis chart. From inspection, the majority of scores exceeded the midpoint.

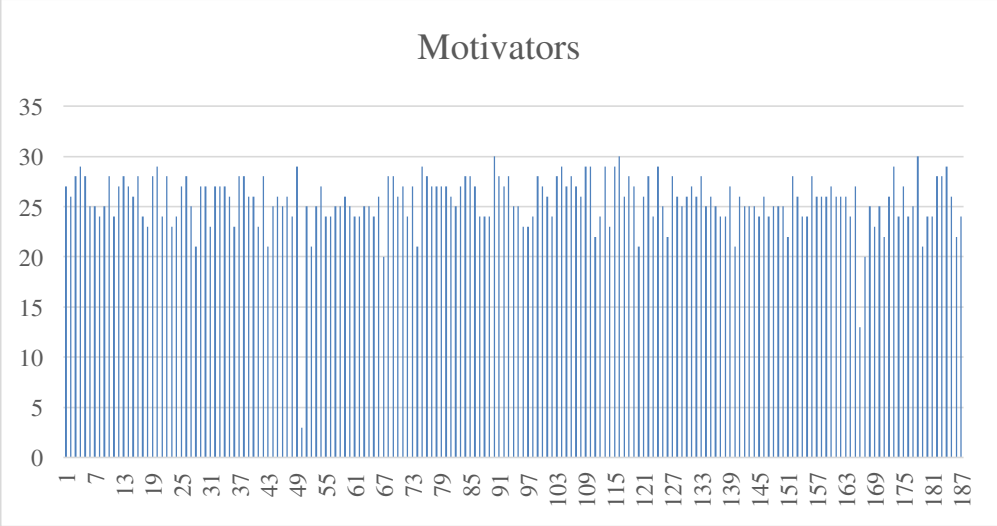

Figure 1. Frequency Analysis-Motivator Ranked Responses

Significance of Job Motivators Scores

A clear pattern is observed in the descriptive statistics and frequency analysis. Of interest is the degree to which the scores are above the mid-point. The data is presented graphically as follows:

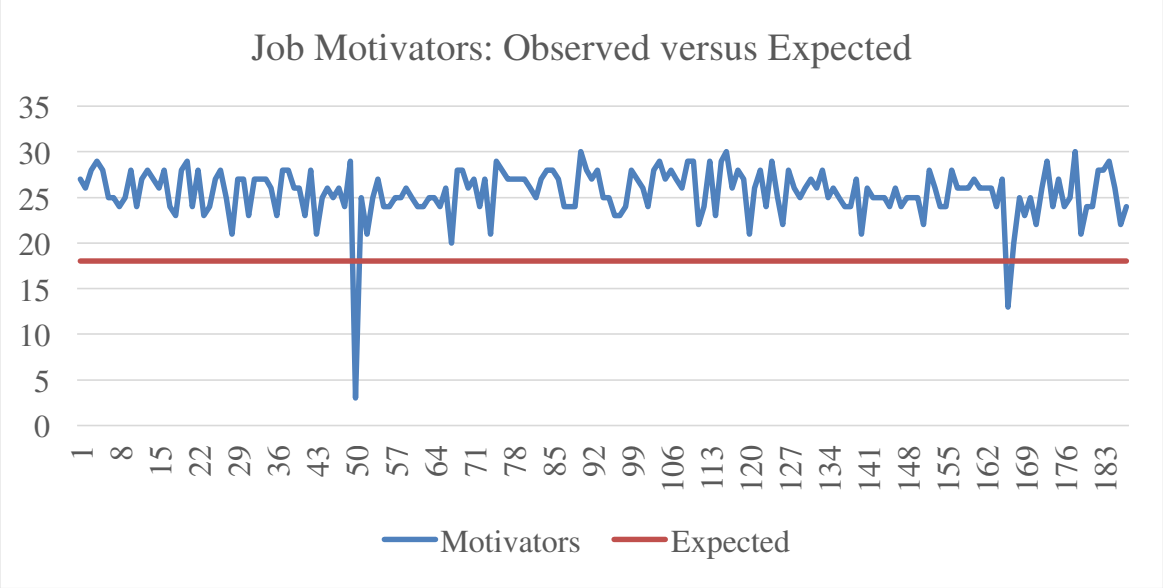

Figure 2. Observed versus Job Motivators Responses

A chi-square test was conducted to determine if the observed values were significantly different from an expected value of 18 (midpoint of scale from 6 to 30). With a p value < .001, the differences were determined to be significant. The chi-square goodness of fit test leads to the rejection of $H1_0$ and the acceptance of $H1_a$ (Minitab, 2013).

From inspection of the descriptive statistics in Table 2, it is evident that the mean is greater than the midpoint (a score of 18), but the most common score (mode) was 17. The scores lower than the midpoint contributed to the rejection of the null hypothesis as observed in the chi square goodness of fit test.

Table 3. *Maintenance Data Analysis responses*

Maintenance Factors	
Mean	19.01
Standard Error	0.25
Median	19.00
Mode	17.00
Standard Deviation	3.39
Minimum	10.00
Maximum	30.00
Count	184.00

Significance of Maintenance Factors Scores

A clear pattern is observed in the descriptive statistics and frequency analysis. Of interest is the degree to which the scores are above the mid-point. The data is presented graphically as follows:

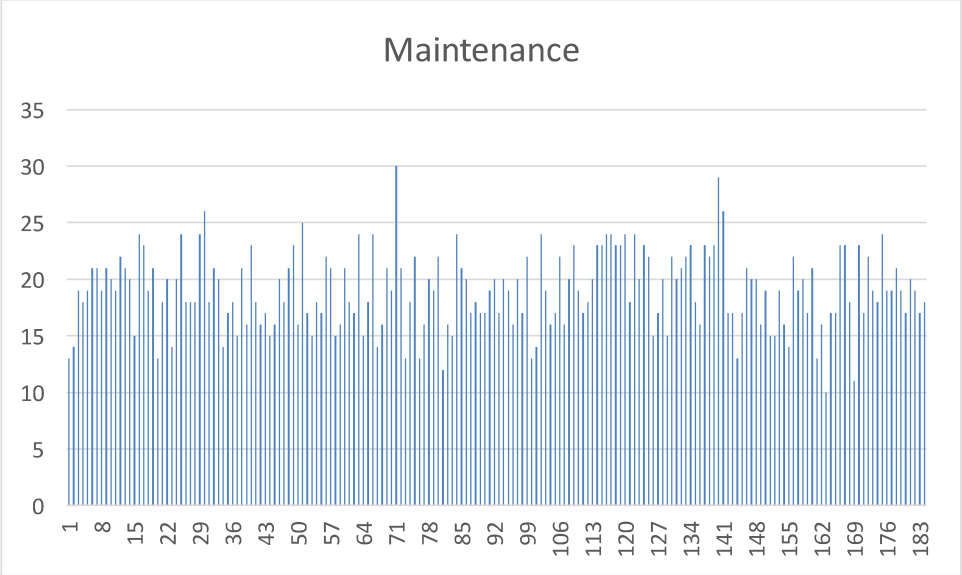

Figure 3. Observed versus Expected-Maintenance Factors Responses

A chi-square test was conducted to determine if the observed values were significantly different from an expected value of 18 (midpoint of scale from 6 to 30). With a p value =.994, the differences were determined to not be significant. The chi-square goodness of fit test leads to the acceptance of $H2_0$ and the rejection of $H2_a$ (Minitab, 2013).

Chi-square: Observed versus expected of 18 (midpoint of scale from 6 to 30) $P \leq .994$. Maintenance found to NOT be significant.

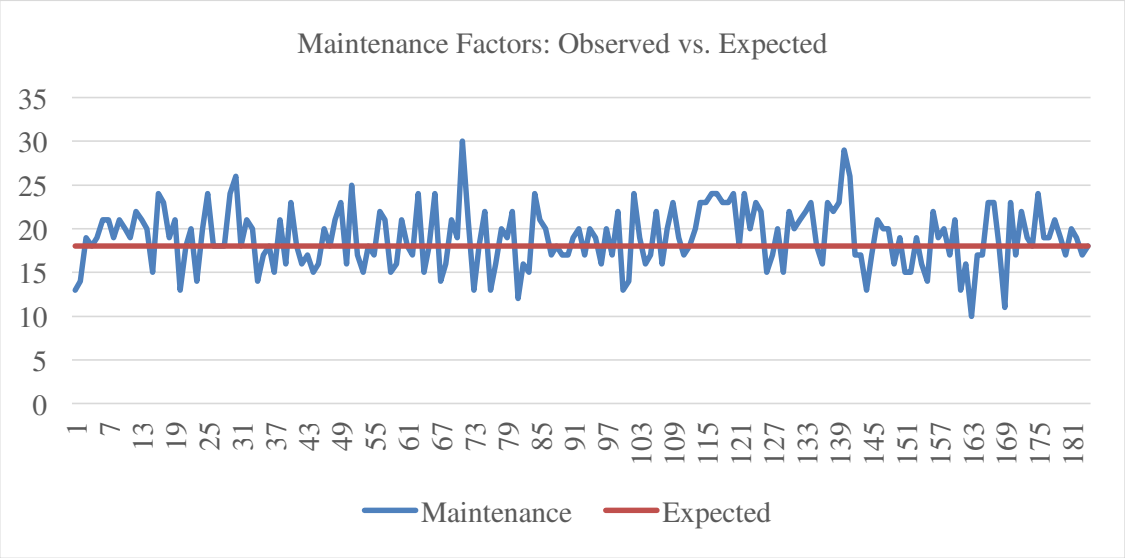

Figure 4. Observed versus Maintenance Factors Responses

SUMMARY

The historical development of motivation theory presented provides the formulation of a theoretical perspective for understanding employee motivation as presented by Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs theory (1943) and Frederick Herzberg's Two-Factor theory (1968). Basically, these content theories attempted to explain why humans are motivated in their work, and also propose applying reinforcement for shaping and motivating human behavior (Schermerhorn, Hunt, & Osborn, 2010). Moreover, these content theories are designed around the concepts of providing extrinsic and intrinsic rewards as incentives for creating a motivating work environment. Project managers can influence project team members' motivation behavior by creating a work environment in which appropriate extrinsic are presented, but their aim should be providing the intrinsic motivation factors that will be most beneficial because the team members will be connected to the cause or goal of the project, instead of the rewards that are attached to it (Schmid & Adams, 2008). Therefore, it is vital that a project manager be skilled in the interpersonal skills of leading and realize the factors associated with motivating themselves and the project team members to successful project completion (PmBOK, 2013).

The goal of this present research study was to assess the overall alignment of self-assessment survey results of project management students as a means of discovering insight to the factors that motivate them and project team members on the job by evaluating survey results. It is with hope that the findings of this study provided insight to the factors that motivate project managers and project team members when working on assigned projects. The research revealed the students tended to exhibit higher motivator scores, and lower maintenance scores. The findings of this study have significant implications for project managers when leading project teams for success.

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