

## **PERCEPTIONS OF HEALTHCARE WORKERS ON JOB DESIGN IN HEALTHCARE ORGANIZATIONS IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The job design of health organizations is one of the ways to provide motivation and job satisfaction, which are key determinants of the quality of health care. In this context, the research of social, motivational and contextual factors of job design is most often performed. However, results often show that there are differences in the perception of these elements of job design, which depend on some socio-demographic characteristics of employees. Therefore, the aim of the paper is to determine which group of elements of job satisfaction stands out as the most important for health differences and which are the factors that affect the perception of job design of health workers. Empirical research and methods of t test and ANOVA test found that there are some statistically significant differences in the perception of the design elements of health organizations of employees of different genders. In addition, the results of the analysis showed that there are differences in the perception of employees of different ages, education and length of service. The obtained results may help human resource managers to define job design that will have a positive effect on the satisfaction and motivation of employees, and thus enable higher quality health care.

**Keywords:** job design, human resource management, health organizations

### **INTRODUCTION**

Job design is one of the most frequently analyzed areas of human resource management, especially in health organizations in public sector, whose ultimate mission is to provide quality health care. Good job design in healthcare organizations clearly defines the organizational requirements in terms of performance to be achieved. As such, job design provides a balance between organizational tasks and activities on the one hand and employee competencies on the other. When employees clearly know what they need to do and what activities and efforts are required of them, they are able to achieve good performance, for which they are adequately rewarded. Consequently, job design can also be a determinant of job satisfaction, certainly in healthcare organizations (Loice, Geoffrey, & Nehemiah, 2013). The degree of effectiveness of employed health organizations can be increased if the job design is in line with their needs and perceptions. In other words, if job design satisfies their psychological characteristics, the degree of emotional, affective, and cognitive commitment to achieving goals will be higher (Zareen, Razzaq, & Mujtaba, 2013). With organizational commitment and increased productivity, public health organizations are able to achieve better performance, ie provide a higher level of health care quality.

Understanding the concept of job design requires prior knowledge of the most important elements of the job itself and job analysis. Namely, the job is a set of work procedures and activities that are related to a specific task within the organization, which are implemented in order to achieve the ultimate goal of the organization, or fulfill its mission and vision. Job analysis is the process of gathering all information related to the job, in order to determine the purpose of the job, the tasks and activities they apply, working conditions, as well as the necessary knowledge, skills and experience that employees must have (Micić, & Arsić, 2010). Job design involves linking specific goals with specific tasks of the organization, in order to determine which techniques,

procedures and equipment will be used during the work (Bogićević Milikić, 2010). As a human resource management activity, job design standardizes the work activities and processes of employees, indicates their work activities and obligations, in order to ensure the achievement of good results during work (Loice et al., 2013). However, job design is far more than a formalized management procedure. Although it can be classified in the domain of extrinsic rewards, job design can be used as a means of rewarding that will have a positive impact on the level of employee motivation. Therefore, it is emphasized that job design should provide three fundamental elements that stimulate employee behavior. It implies a variety of work, which has an identity inside and outside the organization, and which implies a certain degree of autonomy during work, as well as feedback (Robbins, & Judge, 2013).

Issues of motivation and job satisfaction stand out as the most important elements of human resource management, since the productivity of health workers, and consequently the degree of quality of health care provided, is based on these elements (Khaliq, Rehman, & Rashid, 2011). Consequently, the proper job design of health care organizations can be a factor in the quality of health care. Therefore, human resource managers of health organizations are first expected to define the nature of the work that employees will do, determine the character and nature of working conditions, define performance standards to be achieved and determine the characteristics that employees should possess, to match its characteristics business (Bogićević Milikić, 2010). To ensure a positive impact on employee motivation and behavior, the job design of health organizations, whose employees actually represent knowledge workers (Hamzah, Hassan, Saleh, & Kamaluddin, 2017), takes into account three essential elements: motivational, social, and contextual factors (Morgeson, & Campion, 2003).

Motivational elements of job design aim to create a task that will directly affect the level of employee motivation. Fundamental elements of job design related to motivation relate to autonomy during work, defining work with a variety of tasks, where the job itself has a high degree of identity, and its implementation is accompanied by giving feedback (Jackson, Wall, Martin, & Davids, 1993). For health organizations, in addition to the above, motivational elements of job design include defining a creative and challenging task, which will, in addition to the knowledge and skills of employees, actively use their creative potential. Also, motivational elements of health organizations' job design include delegating a certain degree of authority to employees, ensuring participation in decision-making, leadership adapted to contextual factors and continuously improving the skills of health workers (Vilma, & Egle, 2007). As can be seen, motivational elements of job design include elements that are related to the very nature of the job and task on the one hand, as well as the knowledge and skills of employees on the other (Morgeson, & Campion, 2003). But apart from these, one should not omit the rewarding factors, which are also very close to the motivational elements of job design. Healthcare professionals are not only motivated by financial and material, ie extrinsic rewards, which are an integral part of a job (Oyira et al., 2015; Deci, & Ryan, 2008). In contrast, health professionals are more interested in some intangible aspect related to job design, such as the possibility of improvement, advancement, recognition, flexible working hours, job enrichment, career development, etc (Matsumoto, 2018). The social elements of job design are related to the work environment and human relations. Namely, when designing a business, one should not omit the interaction that will take place between employees, because it can directly affect the quality of interpersonal relationships, exchange of ideas, resources and information. Work design needs to anticipate social relationships and define ways in which the quality of interpersonal relationships can be improved (Ryan, & Deci, 2001; Morgeson, & Campion, 2003). The work design of health organizations should include some relevant social elements such as trust building, cooperation, knowledge sharing, support, job linkages, employee interactions with employees of other departments, etc. (Robbins, & Judge, 2013). Contextual elements include the physical, environmental, ethical, and other aspects within which work tasks are performed (Morgeson, & Humphrey, 2006). Having in mind first of all the physical elements, the work of health workers should not take place in too hot or cold environment, with poor lighting and too much noise. Such factors directly reduce the degree of employee satisfaction (Robbins, & Judge, 2013), which can lead to a decline in the quality of

health care. In addition, the work of health organizations necessarily requires clean space and regular hygiene, where the health organization itself must manage medical waste in a way that will not endanger the environment. Finally, when the job is in line with the characteristics of the employee, the possibility of unethical business practices is minimized (Campion, & Thayer, 1985). In order to avoid this potential problem, it is useful to define the ethical standards and principles that should be followed by health professionals when designing the work of health organizations. However, human resource managers must keep in mind that the perception of all these elements of the design of the work of health organizations will depend on the perception of employees. Depending on age, gender, level of education, culture, position in the organization, as well as numerous other socio-economic factors, the degree of perception of job design will depend, and consequently the degree of motivation and satisfaction (Zareen et al., 2013).

## **MATERIAL AND METHODS OF WORK**

The aim of the research is to determine which group of job design elements is of the greatest importance for health organizations, as well as to determine the factors on which the level of perception of these elements depends. In accordance with the defined goal, the main research question is: Which group of elements of job satisfaction stands out as the most important for health workers and what are the factors that affect the perception of job design of health workers?

Empirical research was conducted to examine the goal and provide answers to the question posed. The research process includes health organizations in the Republic of Serbia. The total research sample, consisting of 143 respondents was formed of health professionals, medical technicians and nurses employed in clinical centers, health centers, clinics, public health institutes, hospitals and other relevant health organizations. Respondents in the research expressed their views on a five-point Likert scale. Grade 1 implies absolute disagreement, and grade 5 implies absolute agreement with the stated position. A questionnaire with attitudes adjusted based on research conducted by Morgeson and Humphrey (2006) was used in the research process. The questionnaire was structured so that motivational, social and contextual elements of job satisfaction were measured, with motivational elements divided into task elements and knowledge elements. In the second part of the questionnaire, demographic information was collected from respondents relevant to the research process, ie their gender, age, education and length of service. In terms of statistical techniques, descriptive statistical analysis, internal reliability test, ANOVA and t-test were used. Data processing is performed in the statistical software SPSS V23.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Before proceeding with the statistical analysis, it is necessary to briefly look at the most important characteristics of the respondents in the sample. The sample consists mainly of female respondents, who make up 83.9% of the sample, while male respondents make up 16.1% of the sample. In terms of age, the largest number of respondents is between 51-60 years old (26.6%), followed by respondents aged 41-50 years (25.9%). In third place are respondents aged 31-40 (23.1%), followed by respondents under 30 (14%), while the least number of respondents over 61 (10.5%). The largest number of respondents have work experience longer than 21 years (52.4%), while the least number of respondents have work experience between 11 and 15 years (9.1%). In terms of education, respondents with high school are predominant, accounting for 76.2% of the sample. The least number of respondents have higher education (4.2%).

In the continuation of the analysis, descriptive statistical analysis was applied, ie the arithmetic mean and standard deviation were determined, and then the internal consistency test was applied. The results of descriptive statistics are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Results of descriptive statistical analysis.

Attitudes	Arithmetic mean	Standard deviation
My job requires a lot of interaction with people outside the healthcare organization.	2,965	1,339
Until I finish my work other jobs cannot be done.	3,279	1.14
Other jobs directly depend on my job.	3,454	1.14
My job can't be finished until the others do their job.	3,412	1,009
Excessive noise is not expressed at work.	3,741	1,124
The work is done in a clean environment.	4,028	1,162
Accidents at work I do are rare.	3,685	1,159
The work environment is adapted to different people in terms of accessibility.	3.3	1,163
A job allows me to decide how I will finish a job.	3,727	1,145
The work I do allows me to independently plan how I will perform activities.	3,657	1,157
Work gives me significant autonomy in decision making.	3,531	1,086
The work I do requires me to analyze a large amount of information.	4,062	1,062
The work I do requires me to focus on multiple tasks at the same time.	4,174	0.85
The work I do requires a lot of intellectual effort.	3,979	0.907

In Table 1, it can be seen that the highest degree of agreement of attitudes exists in the attitude "*The work I do requires me to focus on multiple tasks at the same time*", whose arithmetic mean is 4,174. This is also the statement where the greatest homogeneity of the respondents' attitudes is achieved, given that the standard deviation is 0.85. The results of internal consistency are in Table 2.

Table 2. Results of the internal consistency test.

Variables	Cronbach's alpha
Social elements	0.818
Contextual elements	0.777
Motivational elements - characteristics of the task	0.890
Motivational elements - characteristics of knowledge	0.798

It is considered that good internal consistency achieved if the value of Cronbach's alpha exceeds 0.7 (Nunnally, 1978). In all cases, the value of the test is above the prescribed threshold, so it can be stated that there is a good internal consistency of the variables used in the research.

In order to provide answers to the research questions, t-test and ANOVA test were applied in the continuation of the analysis. When it comes to the test, it was used in order to identify a statistically significant difference in the perception of the design elements of the work of health workers of different genders. The results of this analysis are shown in Table 3. Based on the results in the table, it is concluded that a statistically significant difference was found in attitudes under ordinal numbers 1, 2, 4, 7 and 8, while in attitude number 2 the value of the difference is significant at the level of 0.01.

Table 3. T-test results: differences in the perception of respondents of different sexes.

Attitude	t	sig.	The difference in environments
My job requires a lot of interaction with people outside the healthcare organization.	-2,384	0.018 **	-0.71522
Until I finish my work other jobs cannot be done.	-2,770	0.006 ***	-0.70290
Other jobs directly depend on my job.	-1,562	0.121	-0.39094
My job can't be finished until the others do their job.	-2,173	0.031 **	-0.49275
Excessive noise is not expressed at work.	-0.394	0.694	-0.10109
The work is done in a clean environment.	-0.656	0.513	-0.17391
Accidents at work I do are rare.	-1,829	0.070 *	-0.47862
The work environment is adapted to different people in terms of accessibility.	-1,994	0.048 **	-0.52246
A job allows me to decide how I will finish a job.	-1,249	0.214	-0.32500
The work I do allows me to independently plan how I will perform activities.	-0.762	0.447	-0.20109
Work gives me significant autonomy in decision making.	-1,212	0.227	-0.29928
The work I do requires me to analyze a large amount of information.	-0.331	0.741	-0.08043
The work I do requires me to focus on multiple tasks at the same time.	.272	0.786	0.05290
The work I do requires a lot of intellectual effort.	-0.873	0.384	-0.18043

\*\*\* The value is significant at the level of  $p < 0.01$ ; \*\* The value is significant at the level of  $p < 0.05$  ; \* The value is significant at the level of  $p < 0.1$ .

Using the ANOVA test, the existence of differences in the attitudes of respondents of different ages was first determined. The results are shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Results of the ANOVA test: differences in the attitudes of respondents of different ages.

Variables	F	Sig.
Social elements	0.718	0.581
Contextual elements	1,688	0.156
Motivational elements - characteristics of the task	3,248 **	0.014
Motivational elements - characteristics of knowledge	2,833 **	0.027

Note: \*\* The value is significant at the level of  $p < 0.05$ .

A statistically significant difference was found in the variables related to motivational elements, ie the characteristics of the task and knowledge. To determine the groups where these differences exist, the Scheffe alpha posttest was applied, the results of which are shown in Table 6.

Table 6. Scheffe alpha post test results: independent variable – age.

Variables	Groups of respondents	The difference in environments	Sig
Task characteristics	Group 4 and group 5	-0.969	0.041
Characteristics of knowledge	Group 1 and group 3	-0.613	0.094

Group 1: less than 30 years; Group 2: 31-40 years; Group 3: 41-50 years; Group 4: 51-60 years; Group 5: More than 61 years

The results of the post ANOVA test show that a statistically significant difference is achieved between respondents aged 31-40 years and 51-60 years of age on the one hand, and respondents aged less than 30 and 41-50 years of age on the other. The results of the ANOVA test when it comes to the difference in the level of education are shown in Table 7.

Table 7. Results ANOVA test : difference u attitudes respondents different levels education.

<b>Variables</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>Sig.</b>
Social elements	5,843 ***	0.004
Contextual elements	0.616	0.541
Motivational elements - characteristics of the task	2,866 *	0.060
Motivational elements - characteristics of knowledge	2,020	0.137

\*\*\* The value is significant at the level of  $p < 0.01$ ; \* The value is significant at the level of  $p < 0.1$ .

A statistically significant difference was found in the variables related to social elements and task characteristics within the motivational elements. To determine the groups where these differences exist, the Scheffe alpha posttest was applied, the results of which are shown in Table 8.

Table 8. Scheffe alpha post test results: independent variable - level of education

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Groups of respondents</b>	<b>The difference in environments</b>	<b>Sig</b>
Social elements	Group 1 and group 2	-0.47	0.050
Task characteristics	Group 1 and group 3	-0.98	0.037

Group 1: completed high school; Group 2: higher education ; Group 3: college.

The results of the post test show that there is a statistically significant difference between respondents with completed high school and employees with higher education on the one hand and respondents with completed high school and completed college on the other. The results of the ANOVA test when it comes to the difference in the length of service are shown in Table 9.

Table 9. Results ANOVA test: difference u attitudes respondents' different length of working service.

<b>Variables</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>Sig.</b>
Social elements	1,313	0.268
Contextual elements	1,317	0.267
Motivational elements - characteristics of the task	3,666 ***	0.007
Motivational elements - characteristics of knowledge	1,691	0.155

\*\*\* The value is significant at the level of  $p < 0.01$ ;

A statistically significant difference was found in the characteristics of the task, within the motivational elements of the job design. The results of the Scheffe alpha post test are shown in Table 10 in order to more precisely identify which groups of employees found the difference.

Table 10. Scheffe alpha post test results: independent variable - length of service.

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Groups of respondents</b>	<b>The difference in environments</b>	<b>Sig</b>
Social elements	Group 1 and group 4	-0.47	0.050

Note: Group 1: less than 5 years; Group 2: 6-10 years; Group 3: 11-15 years; Group 4: 16-20 years; Group 5: over 21 years

Consistent with the results in Table 10, a statistically significant difference was found in respondents with less than 5 years of service on the one hand and respondents with 16 to 20 years of service on the other.

The obtained research results are important from the aspect of giving an answer to the established research question and the defined goal. At the very beginning, the analysis showed that the work in health organizations is designed in such a way that it requires focusing on several tasks at the same time. This is in favor of the fact that the tasks in health organizations are diverse and as such do not create monotony and routine, which is important for creating job satisfaction. The variety of tasks requires employees to be systematic in their work, which is why they have to analyze a large amount of information at once. If the results of descriptive statistics are observed, motivational elements, especially those related to the elements of knowledge, are of the greatest importance in designing work for health organizations. Human resource managers strive to effectively use the competencies of employees, which is why the elements of knowledge are taken into account when designing a business. Then contextual factors stand out as important, certainly working in a clean environment. Social factors are less important than others, but they should not be neglected, due to the fact that interpersonal relationships are an important element of business design.

In order to examine the differences in the perception of job design of employees in health organizations, the t test was first applied, which identified the differences between male and female respondents. The test results showed the presence of a statistically significant difference in a number of cases. In accordance with the obtained results, it was determined that there is a statistically significant difference in the attitude that work requires a large number of interactions with people outside the health care organization. Employees of health organizations, ie doctors, medical technicians and nurses, perceive the scope of interactions with people in the external environment differently. Male respondents are of the opinion that relationships and interactions with people from the external environment, certainly stakeholders, as important subjects in the work of public health organizations, are an integral part of the work. Male respondents therefore express more of the attitude that the relationship with people outside the organization is an integral part of the job. At the same time, male respondents have a more pronounced attitude that there is an interdependence of jobs in the health care organization, given that the attitude that one job cannot be started until another is completed is more important for them, as well as the attitude that their task is an important link in a number of jobs inside organization. Finally, the results of the t test showed that men have a more pronounced attitude that the work environment is adapted to different people in terms of accessibility and that there are fewer injuries at work. In other words, men who work in health organizations, in addition to believing that job interdependence is an important element of job design, also believe that job design needs to define all the equipment, methods, ways of working and resources to be used during work which will at the same time minimize the possibility of injury.

The results of the ANOVA test first showed the presence of a statistically significant difference between individual groups of employees of different ages. Differences were found in terms of motivational elements - characteristics of the task and knowledge. These differences exist between the four groups of respondents. Namely, differences were found first in employees who are 31-40 years old and 51-60 years old, as well as employees who are less than 30 and 41-50 years old. Statistical analysis showed that older respondents are of the opinion that the job is designed so that there is freedom, ie autonomy in terms of choosing the method of task realization and the possibility of independent work planning. When it comes to the characteristics of knowledge, older respondents are more in favor of the view that work tasks are designed to involve processing large amounts of information, simultaneous focus on multiple tasks and greater intellectual effort. Such attitudes are not characteristic of younger groups of employees, which can be implied by the degree of work experience, but also by the hierarchical position of employees. On the other hand, there is no statistically significant difference in terms of social and contextual elements. This means that all groups of employees work in an identical social environment, have the same attitudes regarding interpersonal relationships and the effects of different factors of the contextual environment regarding noise, hygiene and work ethic. In the continuation of the analysis, the ANOVA test showed that there are statistically significant differences in the perception of respondents with different levels of education. The test results showed that there is a

statistically significant difference between respondents with completed high school and higher education on the one hand and respondents with completed high school and completed college on the other. These differences exist in terms of social elements and task characteristics, as elements of job design. Employees with high school, who can be classified in the group of employees with a lower level of education, have a lower degree of interaction with people outside the health care organization, and their work is not such an important link in a number of jobs within the health care organization. Therefore, this group of respondents believes that the social elements of job design are not so involved in task design. When it comes to the task itself, respondents with a lower level of education do not have as much autonomy in their work and the possibility of independent work planning. There are no differences in terms of contextual factors, nor differences in terms of knowledge, because all employees work in the same work environment and must use their intellectual available capacities during work. Finally, the ANOVA test showed a statistically significant difference in the perception of job design of employees with different work experience. Employees with shorter work experience have less social interactions with people outside the health care organization, less autonomy and independence in work, and the realization of other jobs in the organization does not depend so much on their work. Therefore, this group of employees believes that social, motivational and contextual elements are not of great importance in the process of designing the task, and therefore show a lower degree of satisfaction with the design itself.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

The aim of this research was to determine which group of elements of job satisfaction stands out as the most important for health differences and which are the factors that affect the perception of job design of health workers. In accordance with the results of research conducted within health organizations in the Republic of Serbia, it was determined that the motivational elements and characteristics of knowledge stand out as the most important factors in job design. Healthcare workers are knowledge workers, with accumulated knowledge, skills and experience, which they strive to use in the course of their work. Therefore, it is important for health professionals to define tasks when designing a job so as to use their intellectual capacity, provide autonomy in work and a certain independence in decision-making. The paper found that there are partially statistically significant differences in the perception of job design elements of employees of different genders. Men in health organizations consider certain social and contextual elements to be an integral part of job design, more so than women. The absence of complete statistical significance occurs due to the absence of differences in motivational elements, which is somewhat expected since all employees are equally expected to use intellectual abilities. Statistically significant differences occur in the perception of employees of different socio - demographic categories. Namely, employees with a higher level of education emphasize the view that the social elements and characteristics of the task are important components of job design. Older categories of employees value more those elements of job design that are related to the characteristics of knowledge and the characteristics of the task. When it comes to the characteristics of the task, this element of job design appears to be relevant when it comes to respondents with longer work experience.

The limitations of this paper are also guidelines for further research. In addition to the sample size, some of the representative sampling methods should be used in future research, in order to ensure the optimal balance of different groups of subjects in the sample. In future research, it may be useful to correlate job design with other aspects of human resource management of health organizations, and in addition, it may be useful to compare results between different health organizations to determine if there are differences in job design practices. Research should be conducted more frequently to determine whether in the meantime there is a difference in the practice of designing the work of health organizations and the perception of employees regarding it.

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