Influence of Job Familiarity on Job Evaluation Ratings

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Abstract

The effect of job familiarity on job evaluation ratings was investigated. Data came from a survey of 222 personnel specialists and middle to upper level managers. The results failed to show significant associations between various measures of job familiarity and job evaluation ratings of 7 jobs.

Introduction

Job evaluation committees can be used to systematically analyze jobs to determine the comparable worth of jobs within an organization. These committees often consist of personnel managers, compensation managers, and persons experienced in the jobs to be rated.

The selection of raters for job evaluation committees has been an important subject in businesses and governments. For example, there has been a careful screening of job evaluation committee members in state governments of Iowa and Maine. The evaluators were chosen from a "representative cross-section" of state workers. A "representative cross-section" may refer to job evaluators coming from typical state jobs (Arthur Young, 1984; Mercer-Meidinger, 1986).

One reason for a getting job evaluators from typical jobs is that raters are more familiar with jobs they rate. The job evaluation ratings job incumbents provide are more representative of the "true" job evaluation score. The "true" score represents a job rating that accurately reflects the content of the job.

It is doubtful that a "true" job evaluation score can be attained. Incumbents and supervisors might have a tendency to inflate job evaluation scores to make their job or similar jobs appear more important than they should be. A corollary is that incumbents and supervisors would deflate the scores of other jobs to make their jobs relatively more important.

One reason for the inflation/deflation is that job evaluation results are usually of a more personal nature, involving boasting and protection of one's self interest (Smith & Hakel, 1984). If job evaluation ratings for jobs were directly tied to a job incumbent's pay, job incumbents might rate their jobs higher.

Another reason for the inflation/deflation comes from Zajonc's (1968) Mere Exposure Theory. Zajonc claims that repeated exposure to a stimulus is a sufficient condition for the enhancement of attraction toward that stimulus. In a review of research on this theory, Harrison (1977) documents that repeated exposure to a stimulus leads to enjoying it more under many conditions (good and bad). Mere exposure to a job might lead to higher job evaluation ratings for that job.

A final reason for the inflation/deflation comes from Bowlby's (1973) Attachment Theory. Bowlby maintains that the primary purpose of attachment and affection is to promote the individual's physical proximity to others who can and will act to protect the individual. Attachment with others exists even when contact with others leads to negative consequences. It is possible that job incumbents

might have an attachment with the jobs they are in (and rate them higher) even though their jobs might not be very good. The job is at least a way to help them survive by providing income.

A few studies have examined the effect of job familiarity on job evaluation ratings. Madden (1962) found a significant positive relationship between job familiarity ratings and ratings of five of 14 job evaluation factors: adaptability, decision making, managerial and supervisory, mental work, and working conditions. Cornelius, DeNisi and Blencoe (1984), Harvey and Lozada-Larsen (1987), and Madden and Giorgia (1965) found positive associations between the amount of job information available to raters and job ratings. Hahn and Dipboye (1988) found that evaluators given both a title and job description were generally more accurate and reliable in their ratings than those given only a title. Subjects receiving training, a job description, and job title tended to be the most accurate and reliable raters. In contrast, Smith and Hakel (1979) and Arvey, McGowen, and Dipboye (1982) failed to discover many differences between the scores of raters who had a large amount of job information and those who were given little information.

Existing research has shown inconclusive evidence that job familiarity is associated with job evaluation ratings. Such research has used job familiarity ratings and has manipulated the amount of job information raters receive. The research has not included other measures that have been considered important in the selection of job evaluation committee members such as previous work experience and supervisory experience. The research also has not included many control variables such as job pay and job sex composition considered important in comparable worth and job evaluation research (Rynes, Weber, & Milkovich, 1989).

Some studies suggest that the possession of information about current job pay might strongly affect job evaluation results (Mount & Ellis, 1987; Schwab & Grams, 1985; Grams & Schwab, 1985).

In these studies, half of the subjects received job descriptions that indicate a high salary for a certain job. The other subjects received job descriptions that show a low salary for the same job. Subjects receiving the high salary information evaluated the jobs higher than subjects receiving the low salary information.

Mount and Ellis (1987), Schwab and Grams (1985) and Grams and Schwab (1985) also manipulated the percentage of females reported in the jobs. Some subjects received job descriptions that display a high percentage of females in a particular job and other subjects received descriptions that exhibit a low percentage for the same job. The percentage of females reported in jobs usually did not influence job evaluation ratings.

Hypotheses

The present study investigates the effect of job familiarity on job evaluation scores. Three measures of job familiarity are used. One is a respondent rating of job familiarity. The other two are respondent work or supervisory experience with a particular job. Along with job familiarity, two control variables are included in this study. They are rater perceptions of job pay and rater perceptions of the percentage of females in jobs.

Hypothesis 1

Job evaluators claiming to possess high familiarity about a job will rate the job higher than those claiming less familiarity with the job.

Hypothesis 2

Job incumbents will rate their job higher than those who are not incumbents of that job.

Hypothesis 3

Supervisors will rate the jobs they supervised higher than those who have not supervised the jobs.

Method

Sample

Of the 222 respondents, 85 were managers and 137 were personnel specialists. These groups are in the present study because they often evaluate jobs (Rynes, Rosen, & Mahoney, 1984). Half of the respondents were female. About 80 percent evaluated jobs before.

Procedure

The respondents completed a job evaluation survey at meetings they were attending. I gave respondents a brief description of what job evaluation was and description of the survey. On average, they completed the survey in about 25 minutes. Respondents were contacted, in 1985 and 1986 at American Society for Personnel Administration (currently Society for Human Resource Management) meetings, American Society for Training and Development meetings, and various financial and industrial conventions. The return rate at the meetings was 95 percent. Five percent of the surveys were unusable because they contained missing data.

The survey instrument included three sections. Section 1 contained instructions telling participants how to proceed throughout the exercise and described the job evaluation system to be used. Definitions of three compensable factors (education, experience, and complexity), factor level definitions, and point values from the Midwest Industrial Management Association (MIMA) point system for office jobs were described. Only three compensable factors were included to reduce the amount of time needed to complete the exercise. The three compensable factors were chosen because they account for most of the total score variance in the MIMA office system (Ash & Crnic, 1977).

Section 2 contained job descriptions for a Chemist IV, Auditor II, Accounting Clerk IV, Messenger, Purchasing Assistant I, Secretary II, and Engineering Technician I. The seven jobs were randomly chosen from 105 jobs listed in the *National Survey of Professional, Administrative, Technical, and Clerical Pay* (PATC) (U. S. Department of Labor, 1984). Section 3 contained job evaluation rating sheets and questions about rater job familiarity, work experience, and supervision experience.

Variables

The independent variables pertain to job familiarity. Job familiarity variables consist of job familiarity ratings, work experience in the jobs rated, and previous supervisory experience over the jobs rated.

The control variables include rater perceptions of pay and the percentage of females in each of the seven jobs. Rater perceptions are asked rather than actual survey data because I want to know how the raters feel about the jobs.

The dependent variables are the job evaluation ratings for the seven jobs. Job evaluation ratings are the sum of the ratings for education, experience, and complexity.

There is a separate multiple regression analysis run for each job. For example, the respondents' ratings of familiarity with chemist jobs, perceptions of Chemist IV pay, and perceptions of the percentage of females in the Chemist IV job are regressed on the sum of the Chemist IV ratings for education, experience, and complexity of duties. The same is done for the Auditor II and other jobs.

Results

A few patterns emerge in Table 1. First, the lowest paying jobs tend to be the ones respondents are the most familiar with. The Secretary II and Messenger, the lowest paying jobs, had the highest familiarity ratings. Second, the jobs that respondents believe had the greatest percentage of females in them tended to be the ones respondents are most familiar with.

The patterns shown in Table 1 are confirmed in

Table 1

Univariate Values of Independent Variables

| Jobs | Independent Variables | | | | | | | | |
| | FAMILIAR[a] | | WORK[b] | | SUPERVIS[c] | | JOBPAY[d] | | JOBSEX[e] | |
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Chemist IV	1.7	2.5	1.02	.07	1.02	.07	34.1	10.1	20.0	11.3
Auditor II	3.0	1.2	1.11	.29	1.11	.28	21.7	5.5	34.4	14.3
Accounting Clerk IV	3.3	1.2	1.17	.42	1.25	.43	18.2	5.4	54.7	19.1
Messenger	3.4	1.3	1.13	.32	1.14	.35	9.9	2.8	50.7	22.4
Purchasing Assistant I	2.8	1.1	1.14	.35	1.09	.29	16.2	4.5	48.7	22.8
Secretary II	4.0	1.0	1.26	.44	1.61	.49	14.6	3.1	88.9	9.2
Engineering Technician I	2.0	1.1	1.08	.27	1.06	.24	18.4	5.4	23.8	13.8

[a]Based on 1 = Not familiar with job to 5 = very familiar
[b]Based on 1 = Have not performed the job, 2 = have performed the job
[c]Based on 1 = Have not supervised someone in the job, 2 = have supervised someone in the job
[d]Average estimated annual pay of the jobs
[e]Average estimated percentage of females in the jobs

Table 2. The lowest paying jobs tended to have high familiarity ratings. Female-dominated jobs also tended to have high familiarity ratings. Furthermore, the highest correlations were between job familiarity, work experience, and supervisory experience.

Table 3 shows the job evaluation ratings for each job. Chemist IV had the highest ratings and Messenger had the lowest ratings.

Table 4 shows the multiple regression results for each job. None of the job familiarity variables showed significant associations with job evaluation scores. Perceptions of job pay were always significantly associated with the dependent variables and perceptions of the percentage of females in jobs were significantly associated with two of the seven jobs.

Discussion

This study contributes to the literature on job evaluation by measuring the association of three job familiarity measures with job evaluation ratings. The three measures (job familiarity ratings, work experience, supervisory experience) were not associated with job evaluation ratings. There was one exception. Ratings of job familiarity were positively associated only with the Purchasing Assistant I job evaluation rating.

The job familiarity results found are contrary to results hypothesized. One explanation for the lack of significance is that perceptions of job pay have considerable influence on job evaluation ratings. These perceptions were significantly associated with job evaluation ratings for each job. Job pay perceptions accounted for most of the variance in job evaluation ratings for each job.

Table 2

Correlations Between Independent Variables[a]

Variables	WORK	SUPERVIS	JOBPAY	JOBSEX
FAMILIAR				
Chemist IV	.09	-.05	-.03	-.05
Auditor II	.37**	.38**	.04	.04
Acc. Clerk IV	.42**	.49**	-.31**	-.14*
Messenger	.21**	.22**	-.01	-.05
Purch. Asst. I	.25**	.30**	.08	-.07
Secretary II	.20**	.20**	-.23**	-.07
Eng. Tech. I	.16*	.32**	-.04	.03
WORK				
Chemist IV		.00	.06	.02
Auditor II		.45**	.06	-.03
Acc. Clerk IV		.32**	.25**	.11
Messenger		.14*	.05	.01
Purch. Asst. I		.23**	.03	.12
Secretary II		.08	.23**	-.04
Eng. Tech. I		.20**	-.09	.00
SUPERVIS				
Chemist IV			.04	.00
Auditor II			.11	.06
Acc. Clerk IV			.37**	.21**
Messenger			.03	.05
Purch. Asst. I			.11	.09
Secretary II			.21**	-.03
Eng. Tech. I			-.01	-.09
JOBPAY				
Chemist IV				.13*
Auditor II				.12
Acc. Clerk IV				.37**
Messenger				.03
Purch. Asst. I				.27**
Secretary II				-.00
Eng. Tech. I				.17*

[a]Correlations between independent variables within jobs.
Example: there is a .09 correlation respondents' familiarity
ratings for the Chemist IV and the respondents work experience in
the chemist job.

Table 3

<u>Job Evaluation Ratings For Each Job</u>

| | Compensable Factor[a] | | | Total Score[b] | Total Score SD |
	Education	Experience	Complexity		
Chemist IV	4.98	4.32	5.08	14.38	2.45
Auditor II	3.60	2.60	3.11	9.31	2.08
Accounting Clerk IV	2.71	2.65	2.94	8.30	2.32
Messenger	1.02	1.07	1.19	3.28	.72
Purchasing Assistant I	2.02	2.29	2.51	6.82	2.13
Secretary II	1.71	2.33	2.63	6.67	1.78
Engineering Technician I	2.50	2.38	2.11	6.99	2.20

[a]Based on ratings of 1 to 6 for education and complexity and 1 to 7 for experience
[b]Sum of scores for education, experience and complexity

Table 4

Multiple Regression Results[a,b]

| | T Values for Independent Variables | | | | | Adjusted R Square |
Dependent Variables[c]	FAMILIAR	WORK	SUPERVIS	JOBPAY	JOBSEX	
Chemist IV	1.97	−.35	1.13	6.71	−2.56	.20
	(.06)	(.72)	(.26)	(.00)	(.02)	
Auditor II	1.24	−1.64	.26	6.30	−.23	.16
	(.22)	(.10)	(.79)	(.00)	(.82)	
Accounting Clerk IV	−.38	−1.65	−.19	7.45	−2.02	.32
	(.71)	(.10)	(.85)	(.00)	(.04)	
Messenger	.65	−.55	.71	7.35	.86	.19
	(.51)	(.58)	(.47)	(.00)	(.39)	
Purchasing Assistant I	3.00	.44	.86	9.26	−1.41	.31
	(.00)	(.65)	(.39)	(.00)	(.16)	
Secretary II	.74	−.65	1.69	6.51	.37	.16
	(.46)	(.52)	(.09)	(.00)	(.79)	
Engineering Technician I	.59	.08	.66	8.55	1.07	.25
	(.56)	(.93)	(.51)	(.00)	(.29)	

[a]T values are not in parentheses
[b]significance levels for t values are in parentheses
[c]Total job evaluation ratings for each job

Though Mount and Ellis (1987), Schwab and Grams (1985), Grams and Schwab (1985) and the present study investigated job sex and job pay, they did not control for other factors that might influence job evaluation ratings. Job evaluator race, age, income, previous experience with job evaluation, and education level could also affect job evaluation ratings. These factors could be considerations in the selection of job evaluation committee members.

Another explanation for the lack of significance concerns a tradeoff between getting a large sample size of jobs and getting a large number of respondents. The survey for the present study used seven jobs and three job evaluation factors. Respondents took an average of 25 minutes to complete it. An early version of my survey (with 10 jobs and 12 job evaluation factors) personally took an hour and fifteen minutes. The latter design was more

statistically sound but was unacceptable for obtaining respondents. The result of having seven jobs limits the generalizability of this study to jobs in general. Future research should investigate more jobs such as blue collar jobs.

Future research could include other measures of job familiarity. Examples of other familiarity measures include having raters list jobs their close friends or relatives work in, jobs in the same job classification or family (e.g., clerical, engineering, science, art), or jobs that have the same amount of work with data, people or things. Future research should also manipulate the amount of information job evaluators receive. Researchers could manipulate the length and content of job descriptions, observations of jobs, job diaries, and interviews with job incumbents. The manipulations would reflect the many ways job evaluators receive information for job evaluation.

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