

Abstract

Wallgren, L. G. (2011). *Motivation requested - Work motivation and the work environment of IT consultants*. Department of Psychology, University of Gothenburg, Sweden.

The aim of the thesis is to examine the psychosocial work environment, with a focus on the work motivation, of Information Technology (IT) consultants. The thesis is based on five empirical studies. **Study I** (N=167) and **Study II** (N=380) are cross sectional studies, and **Study III** (N=320) is a two-wave longitudinal study. All participants in **Studies I, II** and **III** responded to a questionnaire on background variables, job demands, job control, motivators and perceived stress. The model used in **Studies I, II** and **III** is a mediational one that proposes that the effect of job demands and job control on perceived stress is indirect rather than direct. The hypothesis of motivators as a mediator was tested using full structural equation modeling (SEM) to estimate direct, indirect and total effects. The sample in **Study IV** consists of 12 IT consultants who were interviewed in order to understand what motivates IT consultants in their work environment. In **Study V**, six team leaders at an IT consultancy firm were interviewed in order to understand how team leaders perceive and construct their subordinates' motivation. The results from **Studies I, II** and **III** highlight the importance of the presence of high levels of motivators in reducing the perceived stress among IT consultants. High job control was significantly related to high appraisals of motivators, and motivators were negatively related to perceived stress. Additionally, the results from these three studies indicate that job demands are positively related to perceived stress. In **Studies I, II** and **III**, motivators were measured using antecedent conditions that may lead to motivation (e.g., recognition, achievement, variety and the possibility for growth). The results from **Study IV** confirm that variety in tasks, job autonomy, praise for a job well done, the chance to acquire new skills, and the sense of accomplishment affect IT consultants' work motivation. One of the main results from **Study V** is that managers have rather vague ideas about the motivation of their subordinates. One interpretation is that managers do not think that increasing the work motivation of their subordinates is an important part of their job.

The conclusion of this thesis is that, among IT consultants, motivators and job demands are important elements in the job stress framework. Motivation is a major component that explains organizational behavior and increases commitment and performance among employees. If a healthy work environment cannot be provided at the individual level, over time, the lack of such an environment will have implications at the organizational level. IT workers, who live at the edge of constant change, such as new technologies, require a high degree of flexibility and adaptability. In its study of contemporary IT workers, this thesis may generate important lessons for managing a major sector of the workforce of tomorrow.

Keywords: IT consultants; IT professional; IS professional; Knowledge workers: Conceptions of motivation; Motivation; Job demands; Job control; Stress; Structural equation modeling; Longitudinal; Narratives; Leadership; Gender differences; Transactional leadership; Transformational leadership

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Motivation requested

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Work motivation and the work environment of IT consultants

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Avhandling för avläggande av filosofie doktorsexamen i psykologi, som med vederbörligt tillstånd av samhällsvetenskapliga fakulteten vid Göteborgs universitet kommer att offentligens försvaras fredagen den 25 februari, 2011, kl 13.00, sal F1, Psykologiska institutionen, Haraldsgatan 1, Göteborg.

Fakultetsopponent: Professor Kerstin Isaksson, Department of Psychology, Mälardalen University.

This thesis is based on the following five papers:

- I.** Wallgren, L.G., & Johansson Hanse, J. (2007). Job characteristics, motivators and stress among information technology consultants: A structural equation modelling approach. *International Journal of Industrial Ergonomics*, 37, 51-59.
- II.** Wallgren, L.G., & Johansson Hanse, J. (2010). The impact of job characteristics and motivators on perceived stress among information technology (IT) consultants. *The Ergonomics Open Journal*, 3, 25-31.
- III.** Wallgren, L.G., & Johansson Hanse, J. (Submitted for publication). A prospective study of the impact of job characteristics and motivators on perceived stress among information technology (IT) consultants.
- IV.** Wallgren, L.G., & Johansson Hanse, J. (2011). The motivation of information technology consultants: The struggle with social dimensions and identity. *Human Factors and Ergonomics in Manufacturing & Service Industries*, 21, 000-000.
- V.** Wallgren, L.G., Leijon, S., & Malm Andersson, K. (2011). IT managers' narratives on subordinates' motivation at work – a case study. *International Journal of Technology and Human Interaction*, 7(3), 000-000.



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