

Project Manager Personification: An Investigation into the Relationships Between Job Characteristics, Team Dynamics, and IT Project Outcomes in Southampton and Gurugram

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Abstract

Project success remains a persistent challenge in both academic research and industry practice, particularly in the domain of IT projects, where failure rates are notably high. This study examines the relationship between the job characteristics of project managers and project outcomes, with a focus on identifying key factors influencing efficiency, effectiveness, and performance. Grounded in Hackman and Oldham's Job Characteristics Theory, the research adopts a qualitative methodology, drawing insights from semi-structured interviews conducted with IT project managers in Southampton (UK) and Gurugram (India). The findings highlight the critical role of skill variety, task identity, autonomy, and job-based feedback in shaping project success, while task significance is found to have limited relevance in outcome-focused IT environments. Autonomy emerges as a key enabler of innovative thinking and adaptability, while structured feedback is recognised as vital for aligning efforts with organisational goals. Skill variety is associated with enhanced engagement, strategic decision-making, and effective risk management. This study extends the application of Job Characteristics Theory to the dynamic and complex context of IT project management, proposing practical recommendations for designing project management roles that optimise performance and motivation. It also provides insights for policymakers to promote effective job design in the IT sector. Future studies are encouraged to broaden the scope by exploring additional industries, geographic regions, and longitudinal effects to deepen the understanding of the dynamic interplay between job characteristics and project success in diverse contexts.

Keywords: Project management, job characteristics, project outcomes, IT projects, skill variety, task identity, autonomy, job-based feedback, cross-cultural analysis, project success.

1. Introduction

The pursuit of project success remains a critical concern for organisations, particularly within the IT sector, where failure rates are persistently high despite advancements in tools and methodologies (Dacre, Eggleton, Gkogkidis, et al., 2021; Lauesen, 2020; Md Sarif et al., 2018; Nelson, 2007). As projects increase in complexity, traditional approaches have predominantly focused on external factors, including the adoption of cutting-edge technologies, refined project management frameworks, and improved stakeholder coordination (Barber et al., 2021; Burke, 2013; Dacre, Eggleton, Cantone, et al., 2021). While these elements are important, they overlook a crucial internal dimension, the role of the project manager (Müller & Turner, 2010; Szczepańska-Woszczyna & Gatnar, 2022; Tite et al., 2021b). A growing body of research highlights the project manager's central position in managing uncertainty and complexity, however the specific influence of their job characteristics on project outcomes remains underexplored (Eggleton et al., 2021; Ika & Donnelly, 2017; Müller & Turner, 2010; Zwikael et al., 2019).

Job characteristics such as autonomy, skill variety, task identity, and feedback have long been linked to employee motivation, satisfaction, and performance in general management literature (Antonopoulou & Dacre, 2021; Dacre et al., 2014, 2015; Wegman et al., 2018). However, project management presents a distinct professional context (Dacre et al., 2019). Unlike operational roles, it involves navigating volatile environments, managing competing priorities, and aligning the expectations of diverse stakeholders (Gemünden, 2015; Sonjit et al., 2021b). These unique demands suggest that the established relationships between job characteristics and performance may not translate directly to project management (Clarke, 2012).

In order to address this gap, we examine the ways in which the job characteristics of project managers influence project outcomes. Hackman and Oldham's Job Characteristics Theory provides a structured framework to assess their impact on efficiency, effectiveness, and overall success (Hackman & Oldham, 1980). Drawing on semi-structured interviews with IT project managers from Southampton (UK) and Gurugram (India), we also consider the mediating effects of cultural and organisational contexts, offering a comparative perspective. In this vein, IT projects offer an ideal focus for generating meaningful, actionable insights and addressing the following two critical research gaps (Iriarte & Bayona, 2020; Shao et al., 2012). First, we seek to explore the effect of job characteristics on project outcomes within culturally distinct environments. Second, we examine the applicability of Hackman and Oldham's Job Characteristics Theory in the context of cross-cultural project management. Our research is thus guided by the following overarching questions: How do the job characteristics of project managers influence project outcomes? How does the effect of these job characteristics vary between Southampton and Gurugram, considering their distinct cultural and organisational contexts?

This paper is structured as follows. First, we provide an overview of the theoretical foundation and existing literature that informs the study. We then outline the research methodology, including the rationale for our qualitative approach, the sampling strategy, and the methods employed for data collection and analysis. Following this, we present the key findings, highlighting the key themes that emerged from the interviews. Finally, we discuss the implications of these findings for theory, practice, and policy, concluding with recommendations for future research directions.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Project Management as a Determinant of IT Project Success

Project management plays a pivotal role in ensuring the successful execution of projects, particularly in sectors such as information technology, where projects are often complex and resource-intensive (Gong et al., 2022; Jugdev & Müller, 2005; Kockum & Dacre, 2021). Historically, project success has been evaluated using the 'iron triangle' framework of time, cost, and scope (Dacre, Eggleton, Gkogkidis, et al., 2021; Eggleton et al., 2021; Pollack et al., 2018). However, evolving demands from stakeholders and organisations have encouraged a broader view, encompassing criteria such as long-term organisational benefits, stakeholder satisfaction, and adaptability to changing environments (Dacre, Eggleton, Cantone, et al., 2021; Joslin & Müller, 2015; Turner & Zolin, 2012). These expanded criteria suggest that project success is not solely determined by technical deliverables but also by factors that extend beyond immediate project outputs (Eggleton et al., 2021).

Building on this broader perspective, the role of the project manager has gained prominence as a critical factor in project success (Geoghegan & Dulewicz, 2008; Shao, 2018; Sonjit et al., 2021a). Researchers have increasingly sought to identify the key drivers of successful project outcomes, placing project managers at the intersection of organisational strategy and team execution (Brookes et al., 2020; Dacre & Kockum, 2022b; Müller & Turner, 2010; Shao et al., 2012). They navigate competing priorities and facilitate collaboration across multiple teams (Anantatmula, 2010; Hsu et al., 2021a). This involves tasks such as resource allocation, conflict resolution, and stakeholder communication, making their contributions vital to project performance (Dacre, Eggleton, Cantone, et al., 2021; Ward & Chapman, 2011). Research by Pheng and Chuan (2006) underscores the need for project managers to possess a diverse set of skills, including leadership, planning, and decision-making, in order to navigate the demands of modern projects.

Unlike traditional projects, IT projects often involve rapidly changing technologies, dynamic requirements, and high levels of interdependence between technical and managerial functions (Alami, 2016; Beecham et al., 2008; Dacre & Kockum, 2022a; J. G. Geraldi et al., 2011; Tampoe & Thurloway, 1993). Despite the

widespread adoption of frameworks such as Agile and PRINCE2, IT projects continue to experience notable failure rates (Dong et al., 2022; Hsu et al., 2021b; Tripp et al., 2016). These outcomes highlight the importance of examining managerial practices and the extent to which they address these challenges (Dacre et al., 2018; Sonjit et al., 2021c; Tite et al., 2021a). Researchers such as Randeree and Ninan (2011) suggest that the project manager's ability to manage team dynamics and stakeholder expectations is often as important as their technical expertise.

Further proceeding with this discourse, an emerging body of literature underscores the value of 'soft skills' in project management (Azim et al., 2010; Dacre, Eggleton, Cantone, et al., 2021; Gkogkidis & Dacre, 2020a; Jena & Satpathy, 2017; Zuo et al., 2018). Attributes such as emotional intelligence, trust-building, and the ability to foster team cohesion are increasingly linked to project success (Dacre, Eggleton, Cantone, et al., 2021; Dacre, Eggleton, Gkogkidis, et al., 2021; Gkogkidis & Dacre, 2021; Rezvani et al., 2016). While technical skills remain salient for project managers (Gong et al., 2022), their capacity to influence motivation, foster collaboration, and adapt to dynamic environments is seen as equally significant (Müller et al., 2011; Müller & Turner, 2006; Rezvani et al., 2016). However, the precise mechanisms by which these characteristics influence project outcomes remain an open area of investigation.

Finally, the interplay between technical and managerial dimensions in IT project management continues to present challenges for researchers and practitioners (Gong et al., 2022). Studies suggest that managerial practices often take precedence in determining project outcomes, but questions remain about how specific managerial attributes, such as job characteristics and leadership styles, contribute to efficiency and effectiveness (Clarke, 2012; Dvir et al., 2006).

2.2 Cultural Contexts and their Impact on IT Project Management

Cross-cultural perspectives in project management have underscored the impact of organisational and cultural contexts on managerial practices and outcomes (Niazi et al., 2016; Zwikael et al., 2005). Frameworks such as Hofstede (1984) dimensions of culture have provided a basis for examining variations in managerial approaches across regions. However, such models have been critiqued for their static and reductive nature, often failing to account for the dynamic and evolving realities of globalised workplaces (McSweeney, 2002; Minkov & Hofstede, 2011; Verbeke, 2000). This critique is particularly relevant to project management, where temporary, complex structures demand adaptability and context-specific strategies (Dacre et al., 2022; Engwall, 2003; Hobday, 2000; Sonjit et al., 2021a). Furthermore, the relationship between job characteristics and cultural context has been explored in broader organisational research. Hauff and Richter (2015) determined that perceptions of core job attributes such as autonomy, task significance, and feedback, vary significantly across cultural settings. This is significant given the unique nature of project-based work, which

is characterised by time-bound objectives, cross-functional collaboration, and varying levels of uncertainty (Dong et al., 2021b; Ekstedt, 2019).

Despite the growing body of research on cross-cultural management, critical gaps remain (Beugelsdijk & Welzel, 2018; Gelfand et al., 2007). Unger-Aviram et al. (2013) highlighted feedback as a significant factor influencing team performance but conducted their study in a single cultural context, limiting its applicability to global projects. Similarly, Thatcher et al. (2002) found positive correlations between job characteristics and employee satisfaction in IT but failed to address cultural variability. These limitations underscore the need for a comparative approach that investigates how cultural factors influence the relationship between job characteristics and project outcomes (Eckhardt, 2002; Vaiman & Brewster, 2015). As such, this study focuses on two contrasting settings. Southampton, as a representative city in the UK, reflects a context associated with low power-distance and individualistic cultural norms, where managerial practices often emphasise autonomy and self-direction (Hofstede, 1984). Conversely, Gurugram, located within India's rapidly growing IT landscape, operates in a high power-distance, collectivist culture, where hierarchical structures and interpersonal relationships are integral to workplace dynamics (Bedi & Mahavir, 2022; Nicholson & Sahay, 2001; Pramanik et al., 2021). These distinctions provide a valuable lens through which to examine the interplay of cultural context and job characteristics in project management.

2.3 Applying Job Characteristics Theory to Project Management

Hackman and Oldham's Job Characteristics Theory (JCT) provides a structured approach for understanding how specific job dimensions influence employee motivation, satisfaction, and performance (Hackman & Oldham, 1980). The theory identifies five core dimensions which include, skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and job-based feedback (Othman & Nasurdin, 2019). These are linked to key psychological states fostering meaningfulness, responsibility, and awareness of outcomes and are expected to enhance both individual motivation and work outcomes (Hackman & Oldham, 1980) (Table 1).

JCT has been extensively studied in general management contexts, offering insights into job design and its implications for performance across diverse organisational settings (Bontis et al., 2011; Pierce et al., 2009; Saavedra & Kwun, 2000). In organisational studies, these dimensions have been shown to positively impact employee performance and motivation, particularly in stable, operational environments (Oldham & Fried, 2016). However, projects are temporary and inherently dynamic, involving distinct challenges such as managing uncertainty, aligning cross-functional teams, and balancing the expectations of diverse stakeholders (Anantatmula, 2010; Dacre et al., 2020; Dong et al., 2021a; Nixon et al., 2012; Scott-Young et al., 2019). These factors differentiate project roles from routine organisational tasks and suggest that existing applications of JCT require

adaptation to the specific demands of project management (Geraldi & Söderlund, 2018; Shao et al., 2012; Tripp et al., 2016).

Table 1: Job Characteristics and Their Theoretical Impact

Job Characteristic	Theoretical Psychological Impact	Expected Influence on Project Outcomes
Skill Variety	Enhances the sense of meaningfulness by allowing diverse tasks that employ a range of skills.	Improves project efficiency and creativity through enhanced engagement and motivation.
Task Identity	Increases a sense of ownership and responsibility by allowing involvement in completing entire tasks.	Enhances decision-making and risk management by fostering clarity and commitment.
Task Significance	Promotes meaningfulness by connecting tasks to broader impacts or societal contributions.	Limited impact in outcome-driven IT projects where deliverables take precedence over broader implications.
Autonomy	Fosters a sense of responsibility and control over work outcomes by enabling independent decision-making.	Increases adaptability and innovative thinking, enabling responsiveness to dynamic project needs.
Job-Based Feedback	Facilitates continuous learning and improvement by providing clear information on performance.	Aligns individual efforts with organisational goals, boosting efficiency and effectiveness.

Criticisms of JCT often highlight its assumptions regarding autonomy and individual-level outcomes (Grant, 2007; Oldham & Hackman, 2010). Critics argue that the theory insufficiently addresses external factors, such as team dynamics, organisational culture, or interpersonal relationships, which are integral to the collaborative nature of project work (Gkogkidis & Dacre, 2020b; Humphrey et al., 2007). Additionally, JCT presumes that employees operate in relatively independent roles, a condition not always reflective of project settings where team cohesion and stakeholder collaboration are pivotal (Morris & Venkatesh, 2010). Despite its potential relevance, research applying JCT to project management remains limited (Ling & Loo, 2015; Oldham & Hackman, 2010). Studies focusing on job characteristics tend to emphasise operational roles or technical functions rather than leadership positions within project environments (Hackman, 1976; Morgeson & Humphrey, 2006). For instance, Ang and Slaughter (2006) examine job characteristics in IT professionals but do not extend these findings to project managers, whose roles combine strategic oversight with operational execution. This gap underscores the need for further investigation into whether the dimensions outlined in JCT are applicable to the roles and responsibilities of project managers, particularly in the context of IT projects (Iriarte & Bayona, 2020; Oldham & Hackman, 2010; Shao, 2018). As such, this research employs JCT as a guiding framework to investigate how job characteristics influence project outcomes, with a particular focus on the project manager's role.

3. Methodology

We employ a qualitative research design underpinned by the principles of grounded theory to examine the relationship between project managers' job characteristics and project outcomes. Grounded theory is appropriate for contexts where existing theories offer limited explanatory power and where detailed, context-rich data are required to construct theory inductively (Charmaz, 2014; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). This methodological approach enables us to apply an iterative refinement of insights as patterns and themes emerge from the data, making it an appropriate choice for investigating the complex dynamics of project management and the influence of job characteristics (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007).

Data collection is conducted through semi-structured interviews, which is widely recognised for its capacity to elicit in-depth insights into participants' lived experiences (Denzin et al., 2017; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015). Our interview protocol is informed by the dimensions of Hackman and Oldham's Job Characteristics Theory, such as skill variety, autonomy, and feedback (Hackman & Oldham, 1980). While the theoretical framework provides a structured foundation, the semi-structured format ensures that participants have the opportunity to elaborate, thus enabling the capture of rich, context-specific narratives (Alvesson et al., 2022). This approach facilitates a deeper understanding of how job characteristics are perceived and enacted within the distinct setting of IT project management.

We recruit participants from Southampton and Gurugram, as two locations specifically selected for their contrasting cultural and organisational contexts (Bedi & Mahavir, 2022; Neal, 2014; Pramanik et al., 2021). These contrasts allow us to undertake a comparative analysis that uncovers latent cross-cultural variations in the perception and impact of job characteristics (Reynolds & Dacre, 2019). As noted, research has consistently highlighted the significance of cultural differences in shaping organisational practices and managerial perceptions, making this comparison both relevant and intuitive (Hofstede & Bond, 1984; House, 2004). The exclusive focus on IT project managers provides a targeted lens through which to explore the unique challenges of managing dynamic and high-pressure projects within this sector (J. Geraldi et al., 2011; Turner & Zolin, 2012).

Whilst all interviews are conducted remotely, this ensures consistency across geographically dispersed participants while addressing logistical constraints. This approach has gained increasing validation within qualitative research, offering accessibility and flexibility without compromising the depth or quality of the data collected (Archibald et al., 2019; Lobe et al., 2020). With participants' consent, interviews are transcribed to create a detailed and reliable data set. The resulting transcripts serve as the basis for our coding and analysis (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013).

Our data analysis adopts elements of the grounded theory framework, following a systematic process of open, axial, and selective coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Our open coding process generates initial codes that are directly grounded in the data, capturing participants' perspectives without imposing pre-existing theoretical assumptions (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Axial coding identifies relationships and patterns among these codes, enabling the development of categories that explain key phenomena (Miles, 1994). Selective coding then integrates these categories into a cohesive theoretical framework that elucidates the central dynamics of the research topic. The constant comparative method is employed throughout the analysis, ensuring that emerging concepts remain firmly anchored in the data (Charmaz, 2014; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

We have applied this methodological approach in order to ensure that our study is firmly based on empirical evidence while retaining the flexibility required to accommodate emerging insights. Through the application of grounded theory we ultimately seek to advance our understanding of the interplay between job characteristics and project outcomes. Furthermore, the comparative aspect of our study affords an emerging exploration of cultural and organisational influences, towards the contribution of both theoretical development and practical understanding within the domain of project management.

4. Results and Discussion

Through a thematic analysis of semi-structured interviews, key themes have emerged regarding how specific job characteristics are perceived to influence project success. While general patterns align with theoretical expectations, adjacent observations raise questions about the variability of these relationships, particularly across different cultural and organisational contexts (Table 2).

Participants widely recognised skill variety as beneficial, often associating it with enhanced project efficiency and effectiveness. For instance, respondents from both Southampton and Gurugram indicated that a diverse range of tasks allowed them to think strategically, manage risks, and maintain engagement, reflecting themes in the literature on motivation and performance (Hackman & Oldham, 1980; Pierce et al., 2009). However, individual perspectives varied, with some participants dismissing the significance of skill variety, suggesting a possible alignment with contextual or role-specific factors. Task identity also emerged as a salient characteristic, with respondents highlighting its role in providing clarity, enhancing decision-making, and supporting risk management. These observations suggest that involvement in an entire task fosters ownership and responsibility (Ward & Chapman, 2011). However, there were opposing views, in that some questioned its relevance, particularly in roles where task segmentation is necessary to ensure efficiency. This divergence raises questions surrounding the topic of how task identity interacts with specific project management practices.

Table 2: Cross-Cultural Comparisons of Job Characteristic Perceptions

Job Characteristic	Southampton (UK)	Gurugram (India)	Representative Quotes
Skill Variety	Valued for enabling strategic thinking and risk management.	Valued for enhancing engagement and supporting team collaboration.	"Having a variety of tasks keeps me engaged and helps me adapt to different stages of the project" (Southampton participant)
Task Identity	Seen as critical for clarity and ownership in decision-making.	Highlighted as important for fostering team accountability and alignment.	"When I'm involved in the entire process, I feel a stronger sense of responsibility for the project's success" (Gurugram participant)
Task Significance	Perceived as having minimal relevance in outcome-driven environments.	Perceived as relatively insignificant compared to other characteristics.	"In our work, we're so focused on delivering results that the broader impact of what we do doesn't always feel relevant" (Gurugram participant)
Autonomy	Considered essential for addressing dynamic project needs and fostering innovative thinking.	Emphasised as crucial for resource allocation and managing unexpected challenges.	"Having the freedom to make decisions is essential when dealing with unexpected challenges" (Southampton participant)
Job-Based Feedback	Highly valued for aligning individual efforts with project goals and improving performance.	Acknowledged as a vital tool for learning and ensuring consistent project alignment.	"Feedback helps me understand what I'm doing well and where I should be doing better" (Gurugram participant)

Our findings regarding autonomy were predominantly positive, with participants linking it to increased work satisfaction, performance, and responsibility. Autonomy was described as a key enabler in addressing the dynamic challenges of IT projects, where unforeseen circumstances often necessitate rapid, context-specific decision-making. These perceptions resonate with broader organisational findings emphasising the motivational and performance benefits of autonomy (Bontis et al., 2011; Tampoe & Thurloway, 1993). Several participants also linked autonomy to better resource management and innovative thinking. For example, one respondent noted that the ability to manage their own time and resources allowed them to allocate efforts more strategically, focusing on areas of the project that required immediate attention. Another participant suggested that autonomy provided the psychological space necessary to explore creative solutions, particularly in high-pressure situations where standardised approaches might fall short. However, some of our participants noted that excessive autonomy could

dilute accountability or misalign team efforts, hinting at a mediating tension to navigate dynamic project environments.

Job-based feedback was consistently endorsed as critical for project success. Respondents indicated that feedback facilitated continuous learning, improved performance, and contributed to project efficiency and effectiveness, emphasising feedback as a mechanism for aligning individual efforts with organisational goals (Tripp et al., 2016; Unger-Aviram et al., 2013). Its dual nature, as both a motivator and a potential source of dissatisfaction depending on its tone and content, also suggests that its impact is highly contingent on delivery. Notably, task significance, while central to Job Characteristics Theory (Hackman & Oldham, 1980), was not perceived to influence project outcomes significantly. This questions some prior studies suggesting that understanding the broader impact of work contributes to motivation and satisfaction (Beecham et al., 2008). The limited role of task significance may reflect the outcome-oriented nature of IT project management, where immediate deliverables often take precedence over broader societal considerations.

One of the most noteworthy findings is the lack of significant differences in how job characteristics are perceived between participants in Southampton and Gurugram. Despite cultural contrasts suggested by frameworks such as Hofstede's dimensions, respondents displayed similar attitudes toward the importance of skill variety, autonomy, and feedback (Hofstede & Bond, 1984). We argue that this alignment may reflect the standardisation of practices in global IT organisations or the shared pressures of managing high-stakes, dynamic projects. Furthermore, the absence of pronounced cultural differences contrasts with extant literature suggesting that cultural contexts significantly shape managerial perceptions and practices (Hauff & Richter, 2015; Nicholson & Sahay, 2001). It raises questions about whether organisational influences, such as corporate culture, override national cultural norms in certain professional contexts. We acknowledge that in this instance the limited sample size and ongoing nature of this research caution against definitive conclusions.

Overall, our findings provide an early indication that project managers' job characteristics, particularly skill variety, autonomy, and feedback, play a crucial role in influencing project outcomes in IT contexts. They also suggest that task significance may hold less relevance in outcome-focused environments, challenging its prominence in traditional applications of Job Characteristics Theory. As such, our observed cross-cultural similarities challenge assumptions about the variability of job characteristics across regions, hint at the potential homogenising influence of global organisational practices in IT projects.

5. Conclusion

In this paper we set out to explore how job characteristics of IT project managers influence project outcomes, with specific focus on the dimensions outlined in Hackman and Oldham’s Job Characteristics Theory. The research also sought to investigate potential cross-cultural variations by comparing responses from Southampton and Gurugram. Therefore, by employing qualitative methods and thematic analysis of semi-structured interviews, we addressed the overarching research questions towards providing initial insights into the dynamic relationship between job characteristics and project success.

Our findings suggest that skill variety, autonomy, and feedback significantly influence project outcomes, aligning with theoretical expectations. Task identity demonstrated context-specific relevance, while task significance appeared less impactful in this outcome-driven IT context. Contrary to expectations from cross-cultural management literature, no substantial differences were observed between participants from Southampton and Gurugram, pointing to the possible homogenising effect of global IT practices. We posit that these findings contribute to interpreting the applicability in a project management domain and highlight the challenges of translating general job characteristics theory into a specialised, cross-cultural context. Specifically, our research contributes to knowledge by extending the applicability of JCT into the domain of project management, particularly within the IT sector (Table 3).

Table 3: Comparative Analysis of Study Findings

Key Finding	Alignment	Divergence
Skill Variety enhances efficiency and engagement.	(Hackman & Oldham, 1980; Pierce et al., 2009)	Participants emphasised its role in managing dynamic project phases.
Task Identity supports ownership and decision-making.	(Rezvani et al., 2016; Ward & Chapman, 2011)	Varied opinions on relevance in segmented task roles suggest contextual limitations.
Task Significance has limited relevance in outcome-driven IT projects.	(Beecham et al., 2008; Iriarte & Bayona, 2020)	In IT projects, deliverables often take precedence over broader societal impact.
Autonomy fosters adaptability and innovative thinking.	(Bontis et al., 2011; Tampoe & Thurloway, 1993)	Participants noted the risk of excessive autonomy leading to misalignment.
Job-Based Feedback is critical for alignment and improvement.	(Tripp et al., 2016; Unger-Aviram et al., 2013)	Feedback was described as highly contingent on tone and delivery.

In terms of contributions to practice, we encourage organisations to design project management roles that prioritise autonomy, skill variety, and structured feedback mechanisms. Training programmes should be tailored to equip project managers with diverse skill sets and strategies to manage dynamic IT projects effectively. The role of feedback in fostering alignment and learning underscores the need for

regular and carefully designed feedback systems to support both individual and team performance. Equally, for policymakers, this study highlights the importance of promoting standards in job design and encouraging cross-sectoral research on job characteristics to guide organisations toward best practices that improve project outcomes and employee satisfaction. The globalised nature of IT work suggests a need for policies that support both localisation and standardisation, ensuring that managerial practices align with both organisational goals and regional cultural contexts.

Despite our findings, our study has several limitations. The small sample size and its focus on IT project managers in two cities restrict the generalisability of the findings. We therefore suggest that future research should address these limitations by expanding the sample to include other industries, geographic regions, and cultural contexts. Longitudinal studies could also provide deeper insights into how job characteristics influence project outcomes over time, particularly in response to evolving organisational and environmental demands. Furthermore, the exclusive reliance on semi-structured interviews represents another limitation. Mixed methods approach, incorporating quantitative surveys alongside qualitative data, could allow for triangulation and a more comparative exploration of the topic. Further research might therefore examine the interplay between job characteristics and other factors, such as team dynamics, organisational support, and leadership styles. We consider that this would likely provide a more holistic understanding of what drives project success.

In summary, we contend that this research highlights the critical role of job characteristics in shaping the success of IT projects, challenging traditional theoretical assumptions and providing actionable insights for practice. In this vein, while the study has addressed important gaps in the literature, it also raises new questions about how globalisation, organisational culture, and industry-specific demands interact with job design. As project management continues to evolve, understanding the dynamic interplay of these factors is a vital dimension in the development of roles that empower project managers, enhance performance, and drive meaningful success.

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