

IMPROVING WORKPLACE EFFECTIVENESS THROUGH SOUND ORGANISATIONAL NORMS AND WORKERS BEHAVIOUR

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ABSTRACT

Over the years, organizations are floated for the purpose of creating and providing goods and or rendering services for the improvement of the prosperity of the society. However, currently, the Nigerian business sector had experienced increased organizational crisis. Hence, this is a clear evidence which shows that these organizations have failed in meeting their societal obligations. Based on this, this review therefore, examined how organizational norms and workers behaviour can improve work place effectiveness. The results disclosed among others that organizational norm is one of the internal control machineries put in place by management to guide managers and employees on how to behave and interact in a workplace so as to achieve organisational goals. Based on this, it was amidst others recommended that organizations should encourage the practice of sound norms since it is a mechanism for moulding behaviour and attitudes of employees and that it should not be used as instrument of victimization in both public and private organizations.

Keywords: *Organisational norms, Workers behaviour, Workplace effectiveness, Managers*

INTRODUCTION

Organizations are seen as vital component of society that produce or render services for the improvement of the wellbeing of members of the society. Robbins and Judge (2007) note that an organization is a consciously coordinated social unit, composed of two or more people, that function on a relatively continuous basis to achieve a common goal or set of goals. Mullins (1996) further emphasises that these organizations have an increasing impact on individuals, other organizations and various communities. Perhaps this is the reason why we have an increasing growth of large-scale and small-scale business organizations everywhere in the society.

It is important, therefore, to understand how these organizations function and the pervasive influences which they exercise over the behaviour of people within and outside the firm. The people as observed by Inyang (2008) are the individuals and groups who make up the organization, they are expected to behave in certain ways that would enable the organization to achieve its predetermined goals or objectives. In other words, the importance of management and the entire human resources efforts cannot be overemphasized, they owe the organization an obligation of operating in consonance with the norms of the organization. This is because well organized organizational norms help firm in achieving organisational goal of maximizing profits by making sound business

decisions, increasing loyalty of customers, building better relationship with clients creating goodwill for the firm, as well as making maximum use of its available resources. Based on these, this study therefore, examines the extent to which organizational norms and workers behaviour can enhance workplace effectiveness and productivity among the firms' employees.

ORGANIZATIONAL NORMS

Every organization has established norms, that is the reason why in contemporary organization, members are not allowed to behave or do what pleases them. Rather, once the organization addresses specific task goals, a pattern of behaviours begins to emerge. The pattern becomes a regular feature of the firm dynamics called norm. In line with this, Stoner, Freeman and Gilbert (2002) report that norms are expected behaviour and value that organization members hold in common. Griffin (2006) in his observation notes that norms are standards of behaviour that the group or team accepts for its members and at which it expects them to adhere. Donnelly, Gibson and Ivancevich (1992) add that norms are attitudes, opinions, feelings, or actions shared by two or more people that guide their behaviour. Kreitner (2007) however, emphasizes that norms are general standards of conduct that help individuals judge what is right or wrong in a given social setting - such as workplace, home, recreation ground or religious organization.

As such Armstrong (2005) posits that norms are the unwritten rules of how to behave. In other words, norms are passed on by word of mouth or behaviour and can be enforced by the reactions of the people if they are not violated. But for those who fail to comply with the organization's norms, they can be criticized, ridiculed or even declared redundant. Norms tell people what they are supposed to be doing, saying, believing, and even wearing. Kreitner (2007) suggests that norms are culturally driven and that they vary from one culture to another, as such they exert enormous influence on members' behaviour. It is also important to note that every mature group whether formal or informal generates its own pattern of norms that constrains and directs the behaviour of its members. In view of this Kreitner (2007) further observes that norms are enforced for at least four different reasons:

- To facilitate survival of the group
- To simplify or clarify role expectations.
- To help group members avoid embarrassing situations (protect self-images).
- To express key group values and enhance the groups unique identity.

However, it is important to point out that the more an individual or employee accepts or complies with organization norms, the more that member accepts the organization standards of behaviour. Hence, work groups utilize norms to bring about job performance acceptable to the organization.

COMMON CLASSES OF NORMS IN ORGANIZATION

The common classes of norms found in most organizations as identified by Robbins and Judge (2007) are as follows:

Performance norms: Here organizations or work groups provide their members with explicit cue on how hard they are expected to work, how to get job done, their level of output, appropriate level of tardiness, and so on. Blue (1995) in his opinion notes that these norms are extremely powerful in affecting an individual employees performance, they are capable of significantly modifying a performance prediction that was based solely on the employee's ability and level of personal motivation.

Appearance norms: This includes things like appropriate dress, loyalty to the organization, when to look busy, and when it's acceptable to go off. Some organizations have formal dress codes. However, even in their absence norms are frequently develop to dictate the kind of clothing that should be worn to work. Similarly, presenting the appearance of loyalty is important, especially among professional employees and those in the executive ranks.

Social arrangement norms: These norms come from informal work groups primarily to regulate social interactions within the organization. With whom organization members eat lunch, make friendship on and off the job, social games, and so on.

Allocation of resources norms: These norms originate from the organization and cover things like pay; assignment of difficult jobs, and allocation of new tools and equipment.

NORMS AND WORK PLACE EFFECTIVENESS

As an organization member, ones desire is acceptance by the organization. Because of ones desire for acceptance, organization members are susceptible to conforming to the organization's norms. Thus, there is considerable evidence that organizations can place strong pressures on individual members to change their attitudes and behaviours to conform to the organizations standard which aim at achieving workplace effectiveness.

Donnelly, Gibson and Ivancevich (1992) identify three social processes that bring about compliance with organizational norms. These include; group pressure, group review and enforcement, and the personalization of norms.

Group pressure: In groups, pressure can be applied to members to conform to group norms. Similarly, pressure is excessive when it interferes with group's goal accomplishment, whereas pressure is inadequate when lack of conformity to organizational norms is detrimental to a member, but conformity is optimal when it results in cooperation, efficiency, and the accomplishment of organization goals. However, a number of factors that influence the level of conformity in an organization are as follows;

Characteristics: Such as the nature of a given job affect conformity. For instance, if an employee is faced with a difficult, unfamiliar and ambiguous task he/she is more inclined to conform to the organization's norms.

Personality: The personality makeup of an individual influences the person's conformity behaviour. On the other hand, a person who is deficient in self-esteem is more likely to conform than one who has the opposite personality traits. Also, the more intelligent an individual is the less likely he or she is to conform to organizational norms.

Group characteristics: Group characteristics affect conformity in a number of ways. For instance, when there is an increase in the size of the group or organization, the pressure to conform increase. Also, when the majority of group members strongly support a position, a member is more inclined to conform than when he or she has one or more partners who disagree with the majority view.

Group review and enforcement: Here, once an individual becomes a member of a group, he quickly becomes aware of group norms. The group position on such matters as production, absenteeism, and quality of output is communicated to them. The group members then observe the actions and language of new members to determine whether the group's norms are being followed. But if both the old and new members are not complying with the generally accepted norms, a number of different approaches may be employed, such as holding a discussion between respective leaders and the person deviating from the norm. However, if this does not prove effective, then more rigid corrective actions are required, such as the membership scolding the individual or individuals both in private and in public.

Personalization of norms: This has to do with how behavioural patterns of people are influenced by their value systems, while, their value in turn are influenced by the events occurring around them. On the other hand, values are learned and become personalized. For instance, the norm of a work group may encourage group members to treat all members irrespective of rank and qualification equally and courteously; and in most cases these norms are accepted by this individuals as morally and ethnically correct, thereby creating effective work place for higher productivity.

WORK PLACE BEHAVIOUR AND WORKPLACE EFFECTIVENESS

Workplace behaviour is a pattern of action by the members of an organization that directly or indirectly influences workplace effectiveness. Griffin (2006) identifies important workplace behaviours to include:

Performance behaviours: These are the total set of work-related behaviours that the organization expects the individual to display based on the nature of their psychological contract. Performance behaviours encourage commitment and high performance among organization members.

Absenteeism: This occurs when an individual does not show up for work legitimately or illegitimately, due to personal or other problems. In some organizations when an employee is absent, his or her work does not get done at all. Therefore, to achieve effectiveness in a workplace, it is the concern of the organization to substitute the employee, within the period of his or her absence, and try to minimize feigned and legitimate absence as much as possible.

Organization citizenship: This has to do with the behaviour of individuals that make a positive overall contribution to the organization. Podsakoff et al (2000), argue that an employee who does work that is acceptable in both quantity and quality, but refuses to

work overtime, will not help new employees learn the ropes and is generally unwilling to make contribution to the organization beyond the strict performance of his or her job are not good organizational citizen. Podsakoff et al (2000) explain that an employee who exhibits a comparable level of performance, in addition, work late when the boss ask him or her to, and often helps the new employees learn their way around, and is perceived as being helpful and committed to the organization's success. His or her level of performance is also equal to that of the first worker, he or she is likely to be seen as a better organizational citizen. Organ (1994) also supports this argument by observing that even though the study of organizational citizenship is still in its infancy. That preliminary research suggests that it may play powerful role in workplace or organizational effectiveness.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The ultimate goal of any organization is to maximize its returns. Hence, the organization requires sound norms and conducive workplace that will facilitate group survival, and enhance group unique identity. Major findings of this study reveal that organizational norm is one of the internal control machineries put in place by management to guide managers and employees on how to behave and interact in workplace so as to achieve organization goals. Norms bring about acceptable job performance standard by the organization as well as regulated social interaction in the organization for social understanding.

It also indicates that organizational norms are tools of change that emphasize behavioural change such as attitude to work, effective performance for higher productivity among the firm members. That for organization to achieve effective workplace aims, there is need for the organization to effectively evaluate the work behaviour of its members by inculcating in them effective performance behaviour, organization citizenship and minimizing absenteeism. Hence, norms should be encouraged in both private and public organizations, since they enhance moulding behaviours, attitudes, and values of members for effectiveness. Managers should as a matter of need try to produce written norms for effective and better understanding of organization members. Lastly, Organization norms should not be used as tools for victimizing group members.

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