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EXPANDING THEORETICAL FRONTIERS FOR UNDERSTANDING HUMAN BEHAVIOUR IN INDIGENOUS NIGERIAN WORK ORGANIZATIONS

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Abstract

Organizational operators' attention has been drawn overtime to the increased level of human complexities resulting from man's effort at changing the way work is done. Understanding human behaviour has been hitherto touted as one sure approach for managing work organizations and attaining desired goals. The potency of this position has so far been well canvassed in behavioural psychology literature and in some instance taken a transcendental dimension. The concern of this write-up is to diagnostically identify key triggers of human resource problems in work organizations and valued expectations of individual employee. The paper also brought to the fore different work behaviours and their capacity to undermine work goals. The write-up had concluded that the intricate and wholesome implication of human behaviour if not underscored, creates a chunk of counter productive work behaviour therefore recommended a transformational attitude to managing work organizations as it is conceptually tailored towards providing the necessary tenets for managing man at work amidst other proposals.

Keywords: Human behaviour, Organizations, Transformational attitude, Social, Psychology, Citizenship

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INTRODUCTION

The place of the human resource in organizational development literature has been emphasized. De Paula (1980) argues that workplace would ordinarily be a dusty legal framework without the human resource. While the human resource is considered strategic to achieving desired organizational goals, Nathy (2002), espoused on the complexities associated with understanding human behaviour which is fundamental to their effective and efficient usage. Jaja (2008) noted strongly that understanding human behaviour in work organizations should constitute a critical focus for managers as it provides the nexus for a cohesive and synergized workplace interest and attainment of goals. Importantly, much of the problems associated with workplace results from man's innate competitive character over scarce resources, power and politics at work amongst others (Thomas & Velthouse, 1990; Ottih, 2006; Jaja, 2008; Gina, 2011). All of these present an intricate web that increasingly requires attention of managers of work organizations as they seek goal attainment. It is also common knowledge in early management discourse as reported in the Hawthorne studies, that group dynamics tends to largely determine individual member behavior thereby shapening outcomes at the macro level (Jaja, 2008; Erefa, 2010; Tammy & Alagah, 2011). Against the backdrop of the aforesaid, this write-up is guided along establishing sources of human problem in work organizations, multi employees dimensional expectations and resultant, individual and group behaviour and their implications on organization goals. In addition, efforts are made to draw up from literature related issues that will amplify the understanding of human behaviour in work organizations in Nigeria.

DIAGNOSING HUMAN PROBLEMS IN WORK ORGANIZATIONS: TRIGGERS

The Nigerian organizations like others within developing economies are plagued with multiple challenges ranging from the sublime to the complex. Notable amongst the problem experienced by Nigerian work organizations are human related problems. Bala & Newman (2009) argued that human problems in indigenous work organization are assuming a dare scope that makes organizational operators give less attention to market and process related problems. However, in this write-up exploring the triggers of the human problem is viewed as significant to attaining goals therefore, the following are identified as sources of human problems – *leadership, organizational structure, communication, poor job description, organizational culture, literacy level of workforce, relational/social climate of work and general economic environment.*

There is obvious huge literature space devoted to leadership discourse in management discipline. All of these efforts tend to accentuate and assert the influence of leadership on desired workplace outcomes. It is subtly defined as the art of influencing people or members of

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a group towards achieving common goals. This simple definition denotes the fact that the leaders must exhibit certain behaviour often described as style to drive the entire goal seeking effort. Batemen (2000) noted that leadership style applicable which are encapsuled as employee oriented and task oriented has a significant role in shaping followers behaviour, actions and support for manager towards goals. This thinking has overtly created a further search and re-orientation of leadership thoughts thereby paving way for fresh and contemporary conceptual birth like transformational leadership (Avolio & Bass, 1999), transactional leadership (Bass, 1990; Bass, 1998), servitude leadership (Osborne, Hunt & Jauch, 2002; Mullen & Kelloway, 2009) charismatic leadership (Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Rowden, 2000; Porter & McLaughlin, 2006) amongst others. The centrality of leadership style of managers in shaping behaviour is strongly reported in Truman (2011); Ajaral (2011); Kape & Timothy (2013); Edwin & Millionaire, (2014). According to the authors leadership style of managers activate both functional and dysfunctional outcomes. The political and power dynamics of organization derives largely from what leadership styles are transmitted while managing. Managers in work organizations are expected to create a relatively conducive operational climate that is fair, just and perhaps egalitarian. The implication of the reverse, it promotes counter-productive work behaviours that will not be consistent with desired work goals and analytically described as human resource problem at work. Irrespective of the battery of leadership theories and expositions in management literature, they are in most cases poorly deployed by managers who in some instance do not contextualize their application as prescribed in the contingency thoughts (Feedler & Mahar, 1979; De Jong & Hartog, 2007; Miles and Mangold, 2002).

Second, the structure of organization provides the skeletal framework with which responsibilities are assigned. It provides the basis for job design, task assignment and authority definition (Ottih, 2006). Classically, literature has outlined two structural types namely; mechanistic (rigid) and organic (flexible) structures (Kuprenas, 2003). Essentially, these structural types come with their different attributes which empirical literature asserts that they variously have their influence on the employees (Lin & Germain, 2003, Nalom, 2003, Meijard, 2005). Expectedly, most of the problems arising from work structures are related to how they prescribe function and allow authority distribution among work members. In addition structures, determines largely power relationship at work, since it defines who occupies and play roles at all levels.

Empirical evidence abounds on the influence of job description on employee performance (Awujo, 2000; Tamunomiebi, 2005; Grant and Matthews, 2009). Poorly described job and work tasks have increasingly been mentioned as that which blurs employees understanding of manager expectations. Where jobs are poorly defined, employees are likely to

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experience frustration that diminishes their cognitive potency to articulate comprehensively and attain goals (Griffin & Bateman 1986; Jorg and Schyns, 2004). There also exist a strong link between workplace structure and communicational architecture of work (Woherem, 2000; Laudon & Laudon, 2001)

Communicational practices are at the centre of all workplace activities thereby underscoring its importance. It is considered a pervasive responsibility across all work levels. Although some literature exist to show that structure of work determines largely the communicational pattern at work, the fundamental of communication in terms of clarity, conciseness, consideration amongst others are credible premise for its functionality. This simply suggests that were communication within the workforce do not aptly convey the vision, mission and goals of the organization, it creates a barrage of misconceptions and inability to attain desired goals. Aside the expression of the strategic intent through quality communication, all routine activities of the organization are employed daily to all work members. In all, the communication behaviour of firms has a relationship with employee work behaviour (Balakrishman & Masthan, 2013). Benn (2003) argues that communication behaviour in still a work climate that brew ultimately the culture of work.

Organizational culture as conceptualized provides the necessary prescriptions that shapens the overall behaviour of employees in the organization. It is represented by the norms, values, ethics, rules, regulation and policies of work. The culture of work organization is far at variance with individual or external environment where they are drawn. Often times the rigidities that comes with compliance and adherence to work rules and ethical conduct has generated issues that also reflect on the relational climate of work. Its capacity to spill into social and psychological matters that reminisces frustration, depression and absenteeism is underscored (Joiner, 2001; Dwyer, Richard & Chadwick, 2003; Dyck, Frese, Baer & Sonnetang, 2005). Alongside these catalogues, it is not uncommon to find an ‘illiterate’ workforce that is exceptionally divergent in viewing organizational policies and actions. The emergent outcome in this circumstance is a poor relational climate that instigates confrontations, workplace conflicts and other dysfunctional workplace outcomes.

Importantly, the general economic environment in which the organization operates undoubtedly makes for strategic options that drive goals. On the other hand, it also defines perceptionally the earning power of the wages and salaries of employees as may be earned. The implication is, an unfriendly economic environment will be the essence of poor wages which detracts from the aspiration of good earning which is a common focus for employees at work (Okpara, 2004; Shabil & Ariyo 2009). The outcome again is depression and other counter productive work behaviour. The list of the sources of human problem in work organizations

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though may be expansive, what is chronicled in this write-up, attempts to showcase the inherent and prevalent sources within the Nigerian context and are considered leading and generic.

While our list is not likely exhaustive, antecedents of these problems, provoking dynamics in work organizations abounds. These problems notably, have far-reaching consequences that are in most cases dysfunctional and results to entropic experiences. This being the case, managing these issues at work also requires that employee workplace expectation is also understood. Expectational variation amongst work members has thrown up system imbalances culminating to poor relational climate. The expectation theories as noted are amplified in social exchange theories which is largely anchored on reciprocity. On this role, the next section of this write-up x-ray employee work place valued expectation.

EMPLOYEE WORK PLACE EXPECTATIONS

Multiple expectations accompany the presence of human resource in work organization. Employees as they seek to render their services using their acquired skill and competencies, they do expect in return some benefits. Though these benefits are diverse considering different levels of individual needs that Stodgill (1980) described as basis for human motivation, the benefit in order of value are largely *financial, psychological, social, skills improvement and growth*. (Apah, 2007; Kavaj & Nezibil 2009; Levi, 2012; Ekeeson, Chamberlain & Jehu, 2014)

In Aluko (1996); Johnnie (1996); Chukwuigwe (2002) studies on why work is considered a major endeavour for the African worker and perhaps what motivates the African worker, it was substantially noted that financial reward is central. Simply put, financial benefit is imperative to getting them started and sustaining their commitment to work responsibilities. Erefa (2010) has observed that the Nigerian worker has more recourse to the continuance component of commitment which according to Avolio & Bass (1999) is cost associated. It suggests that the primal consideration for financial return is key. Contextually, the Nigerian economy is depressed therefore, the average worker is interested in what is earned as a way of meeting other imposing needs; there is also the imposing value system that encourages materialism amongst society members and the instrument for promoting such acquisition is essentially money which the employee often look forward to.

Spreitzer, (1995), Maslach & Leiter (2008); Seibert et al (2011) have reiterated the place of psychology in employee work disposition. The seeming abstract nature of the psychology phenomenon in human being would have made it inconsequential but in Harvey (2006) psychology is mentioned as an inner aura that constitute the basis for several other actions. It promotes the stability and confidence needed to undertake tasks within and outside work. Recent studies on psychological capital stress the fact that individuals in work organization

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enjoy the psychological benefits that get them prepared for as many other life aspirations as possible. The psychological content of the worker is a strongly considered aspect that activates their self-efficacy to undertake assigned tasks irrespective of the inherent skills (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Avolio & Luthans, 2006; Avey et al, 2006).

Further, the social benefit offered by work organization is imperative. Maslows (1958) theory of motivation provides us the theoretical and conceptual background. Ahiauzu (2008) in his discourse on African life cosmogony has drawn attention to the social leaning of the African in which the Nigerian worker belongs. The work organization provides the environment for meeting with people of diverse inclination thereby, engendering friendship, long-term relationship, and belongingness. Organization as they are, provides the social asset that promotes the inherent value in human beings as they see themselves as being meaningful and productive within society. Jaja (2008) noted that the African man enjoy social leverage and respect when he is found to be productively engaged in society in some instances earns him the traditional award of a 'chief' amongst his peers. The African context is visible with several awards that bring families and friends and well-wishers together for celebration and thanksgiving (Igbodo, 2011, Baley, 2011).

Another benefit that is offered by organizations is, skills improvement and this is with a view to remaining relevant to organizational operations and other responsibilities. Value enhancement concern for talent enrichment has been heightened owing to radical and revolutionary technological breakthrough that changes rapidly the way work is done. This means that employees without the requisite skills for operational responsibilities are likely to be moved out of work therefore, the expectation of continuous skill improvement is fundamental. Growth on the job is also viewed as a major expectation (Hertzberg, 1964; Lasbry, 1990; Cales, Neto, & Pulemon, 1996; Egonu & Agaro. 2004; Gellil and Alzal, 208; Ikwengansi, 2010), Achieving career goals require that structural mobility should be seen to be permissible and this is through quality and fair appraisal practices. Infact, the Hertzberg two factor theory of motivation provides a good theoretical reinforcement on growth as a major benefit that employees at work are interested. This corroborates Maslow's self-actualization need of man at work.

COUNTER PRODUCTIVE WORK BEHAVIOUR: AN AFTERMATH

The realization of the aforementioned benefits in whatever dosage by the employee inadvertently promotes commitment of the employee in most cases. Conversely, when not attained promotes poor role behavoiur that serves as impedance to realization of work goals and this constitute the next stage in this write-up. It has been strongly noted in this paper that

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human behaviour in work organizations largely determines their survival and sustainability. However, attention has been drawn to counterproductive human behaviour that inhibits the organizational capacity to achieve goals. Some of these behaviours though prompted by organization, managerial and other environmental conditions, there is also the inherent tendency of man's complexity to initiate and sustain counter productive work behaviour. Lamech (2010) argues that the tendency of the worker to deviate from work goals is owed to organizations inability to synergize interest both at macro & micro levels of work. It produces absurd outcomes, which includes; poor product quality; low level productivity; poor innovative culture; incessant relational conflicts; low work morale; low inventory levels; poor operational practices resulting to untimely service delivery; poor customer relationship management practices due to lack of commitment from the workforce; increase level of labour turnover and lateness/absenteeism. These outcomes are wholesomely dysfunctional to the extent that if not properly managed can result to positive entropy. Bearing this in mind, concerted organizational actions are strategically required to instigate functional outcomes.

MITIGATING COUNTER PRODUCTIVE WORK BEHAVIOUR

A vast array of conceptual positions exist (Pfeffer, 1995; Yang, Mossholder & Peng, 2009; William, Parker & Tumer, 2010; Purcell & Hatchinson, 2007; Becker, 2004; Hackman & Oldham, 1980; Hopkin, 2002) to either mitigate complex and dysfunctional behavioural dynamics that plague work organizations or promote reliable practices that guarantee the attainment of work goals. Hitherto, emerging schools of thought have inundated behavioural psychology literature with what can be done to manage human behaviour and channel it towards functional outcomes that creates for sustainable goals. In this paper, attempt is made at proffering lucidly some means of dealing with the human problems that characterise work organizations. Though inexhaustive, they are generically presented thus;

a) Human Capital Development (Ottih, 2006; Everton & Lindsay, 2010; Churchill, 2011; Jamato, 2014)
b) Organizational Citizenship Behaviour (Corgan & Mooreman, 2003; Folger & Greenberg, 2005
c) Transformational Leadership (Avolio & Bass, 1990; William, Parker & Turner,, 2010; Kelloway & Barling 2010)
d) Quality Policy Framework (Balanced Mix) (Isaiah, 2007; Mujarat, 2009; Kape & Timothy, 2013)
e) Cultural Re-orientation (Jaja, 2000; Albert & Mezile, 2006; Cornell, 2006; Kalio, 2010;)
f) Ethical Adherence Capacity Building (Akpotu & Leebari, 2016; Daisy, 2010

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g) Psychological Empowerment (Thomas & Velthouse, 1990; Spreitzer, 1995; Seibert, Wang & Courtwright, 2011)
h) Flexible Structural Architecture (Ottih, 2006; Belmore, 2007; Mashir & Lambert, 2010; Barozi, 2014)
i) Corporate Entrepreneurship Attitude (Covin & Slevin, 1991; Brush et al, 2010; Idah & Mahmood, 2011)
j) Managed Organizational Politics (Davies, Bell, Payne & Kreiser, 2010, Vigoda-Gadot, 2006
k) Social Need Enhancement Practices. (Maslow, 1958; Oloko, 1996; Avey, Patera & West 2006; Maslow & Leiter, 2008)

CONCLUSION AND PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

In this write-up, the primary focus is explaining human behaviour and allied dynamics that shapes behaviour at work. From the review of existing body of knowledge in the field of behavioural psychology and related areas, it is established that aggregate set of complex human behaviour and actions exists that channel their commitment and showing extra-role attitude that supports attainment of both individual and organization goals. What the write-up has brought to the fore is its capacity to highlight employee workplace expectations and that shortfall of the expectations result to counterproductive work behaviour. It has concluded that understanding these behavioural dynamics of the employee is imperative for attaining work goals. Indeed, this understanding sets the platform for ensuring effective management of the human resource. Managerial consciousness towards leveraging behaviour that are pro-social and encouraging citizenship attitude is also underscored. Aside the psychological expectation, the structural designs that culminates to communicational patterns needs continuous evaluation and ensuring organic practices that channels functional behaviour.

WAY FORWARD

The field of management though has had robust and vast conceptualizations, there is obvious need to illuminate the multi positions with contextualized knowledge especially as it relates with the complex human behavoiur that is often fashioned based on environmental (social, culture, ecological) milieu. Concerted efforts are required in building indigenous theoretical positions that best serve managerial needs while managing human behaviour in indigenous circumstances. The concreteness and functionality of the multiple theoretical perspectives can be affirmed through empirical research incursions into indigenous work organizations. For instance, the

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correlation between corporate organic behaviour and pro-social behaviour can be expeditiously explored scientifically.

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