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Title

A STUDY OF ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT: EXPLORING THE IMPACT OF HIGH PERFORMING EMPLOYEES THROUGH JOB SATISFACTION

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ABSTRACT:

The purpose of this study was to understand the degree to which employees' satisfaction with merger-induced organizational changes impact on their productivity and the merged-firm performance. This is because, the introduction of market-driven business reforms in many developing economies has seen the emergence of growth-drivers that includes the search for new markets, increasing competition in local markets, new investors' interest in emerging markets, and hence the desire for firms to merge. The results showed that human resource issues are important aspects of mergers which, if it is not well handled, may impact negatively on employee satisfaction with consequent repercussions on productivity and the success of the merger. It is concluded that employee satisfaction to a merger-induced organizational changes could be enhanced by instituting effective two way communication system and using participatory approaches in job redesign processes. By implication, merger-induced change has human factor challenges that merging firms need to understand.

Keywords: Organisational Development, Employees Satisfaction, Merger Communication, Performance Improvement

INTRODUCTION:

The introduction of market-driven business reforms in many developing economies has seen the emergence of growth-drivers that includes the search for new markets, increasing competition in local markets, and new investors' interest in emerging markets. In enhancing such growth and overcoming competition, mergers and acquisitions have become a favored strategy that is used by most firms to ensure rapid penetration of new markets while lowering entry risks and costs. Mergers and acquisitions are used by firms to strengthen and maintain their position in the market place.

In Ghana, mergers and acquisitions of firms were not a common feature of the industrial environment because of the country's unique entrepreneurial business culture. The level of competition and globalization of businesses have changed this culture. There are now numerous examples of these mergers and acquisitions. Examples include the acquisition and merger between Ghana Breweries Limited and Guinness Ghana Limited in the year 2004, and that between Vodafone Plc and Ghana Telecom in the year 2008. Mergers and acquisitions have also erupted in the Ghanaian banking sector. In the year 2007, the Bank of Ghana (BoG) took steps to increase the minimum capital requirements of banks by advising local banks operating in the country to consider mergers, inter-bank acquisitions or enlistment on the stock market as ways of raising enough capital to meet the BoG's capital base requirement of GH¢60 million. This means a change in organizational structures, defining new work roles, cultural change and others which are likely to erupt as result of these mergers and acquisitions.

A number of studies abound in the literature which identify the following factors posing challenges to the merger process: - the improper integration of culture, management of the change process, the technological and business intelligent requirement, the regulatory and compliance requirements, as well as the human element. Yet, there is the realization that little or no attention is given to the human element or the human side of change which is the real key to maximizing the value of a merger (Gunther, 2001; Kay & Shelton, 2000; Schuler & Jackson, 2001; Schuler, Tarique & Jackson, 2004). By virtue of this realization, though mergers and acquisitions are seen by many as a relatively fast and efficient way to expand into new markets, incorporate new technologies and to innovate, their success is by no means assured, with majority of them falling short of their stated goals and objectives (Schuler & Jackson, 2004).

The consequence of such failure is observed by Schuler and Jackson (2004) to include numerous social costs, including lost jobs, lost income to families and lost taxes to the local communities, and which costs might not be felt when mergers and acquisitions are successful. While some mergers and acquisitions failure can be explained by financial and market factors, a substantial number of such failures can also be attributed to the neglect of human resource issues and activities in the course of the merger-induced organizational change processes (Schuler & Jackson, 2001). Numerous studies (for example: Antila & Kakkonen, 2008; Björkman & Søderberg, 2006; Guerrero, 2008; Kavanagh & Ashkanasy, 2006; Schuler et al., 2004) have also affirm the need for firms to systematically address human resource issues and activities in their merger and acquisition activities.

This need is derived from the observation that change managers engaged with the acquisition and merger process tend to pay so much attention to the transformation of the operational, legal, and financial components of mergers and acquisitions but not the human components of their organizational systems. This observation can be considered a major weakness which reflects a knowledge gap in the field of organizational behavior concerning the contributing effect of "employees' satisfaction" to the success or failures of merger-induced organizational change processes.

The rationale for this study, therefore, was to bridge this gap by finding out whether employees will perceive a merger as an organizational process that changes unfavorable organizational climate and culture, enhances employees' morale to develop good work attitudes towards increased productivity and firm performance. The purpose was to understand the degree to which employees' satisfaction with merger-induced organizational changes impact on their productivity and the merged-firm performance. In other words, the study was aimed at understanding how employees coped with uncertainties associated with the organizational change introduced by the merger of two mining firms in Ghana. Such understanding could be used as a knowledge base for understanding employees' expectation during the mergers and acquisition process, and which knowledge could be used to develop strategies in satisfying employees' needs and rewarding them in a more satisfactory manner.

LITERATURE REVIEW:

Most of the literature that focuses on the human side of mergers and acquisition processes has entirely or at least partially concentrated on the psychological and behavioral effect of mergers and acquisition on employees (Hogan & Overmyer-Day, 1994). In many cases, mergers and acquisition involves important decisions regarding the displacement and re-engagement of employees. The organizational justice theory provides important theoretical insights regarding how these decisions can affect the perceptions and behaviours of surviving employees. Greenberg (1987) noted that during the transitional period of a merger process, employees may pay close attention to how decisions are made, and how they (employees) are treated in terms of both procedural and distributive unfairness. Though deliberations on mergers are often confined to top management of the merging firms, snippets of related information may leak down the organizational hierarchy to the lowest employees' level, resulting in possible rumors and speculations regarding various merger scenarios which could make employees become uncertain and anxious about their futures (Buono & Bowditch,1989). As a consequence, the level of employee anxiety may reach the highest level once a merger becomes a reality (Buono & Bowditch, 1989).

Marks and Mirvis (1992) explained that such increased anxiety is likely to push employees to be preoccupied with the repercussions of the merger on their jobs, livelihoods, and careers. This is because employees' perception of unfairness in the merger process could negatively affect their satisfaction, commitment, trust, and consequently, their intention to stay in the new organization that emerges (Dailey & Kirk, 1992; McFarlin & Sweeney, 1992). However, this anxiety-induced employees' stress may be substantially reduced when important decisions are made and announced by their management regarding which of the firm's departments or units are likely to be affected by the merger, and the employees who might be retrenched (Garpin & Herndon, 2000; Marks & Mirvis, 1992).

Stress and conflict could emerge from a merger as a result of formal organizational entities no longer existing, and employees feeling stronger senses of loss, grief, and even anger about losing their old identities and values (Ivancevich, Schweiger, & Power, 1987; Sutton, 1987). Elsass and Veiga (1994) noted that this culture-related stress, tension, and resistance are likely to be highest when employees are pushed to abandon their old organizational culture and to learn a new organizational culture. But as Buono and Bowditch (1989) had noted, employee resentment to culture change could result in employees becoming antagonistic towards management and other organizational members perceived intruding enemies. Such culture clash may become a major barrier to effective merger by exacerbating inter-group conflict (Buono & Bowditch, 1989).

Job re-assignments and negotiations impact substantially on the organizational climate and subsequently on employees' attitudes and behaviours. This is because employees who perceive their new job characteristics and job environments to be worse than their previous jobs will feel uncertain and anxious about their new tasks and responsibilities, a situation that affect their psychosocial well-beings. Such new stress could result in employees developing various mental and physical illnesses with an undermining consequence on their motivation (Cartwright

& Cooper, 1996; Ivancevich et al., 1987). As Buono and Bowditch (1989) had noted, cultural and psychological integration takes a longer time to be attained, and therefore employees caught up in a merger might required more time to be able to undergo appreciable cultural adjustment.

This, as Hackman and Oldham (1975) had earlier observed, is because the stabilization of employees' new job characteristics may have an enduring effect on their job satisfaction and commitment, especially if they perceive the characteristics of their new jobs to be worse than those of the previous ones. This perception may also cause employees to question the fairness of the procedural and distributive systems to be associated with the new organizational structure created by a merger. The consequence of employees questioning the fairness of their new organizational structure is that they may end up distrusting the actions of those managing the newly merged organization. Once such employee distrust is developed, it may be difficult to re-establish it (Dailey & Kirk, 1992; McFarlin & Sweeney, 1992). The implication here is that when employees develop negative perceptions about merger-induced organizational changes and also distrust those managing the changes, their job satisfactions and commitments will also be negatively affected. This implication, if not adequately understood and handled by change managers during mergers, could prolong employees' anxiety and uncertainty, with negative consequences on their productivity and organizational performance.

METHODOLOGY:

Data Collection:

The survey approach was used in this study to obtain data. Since this study was organization-oriented, convenience sampling was used to select the study participants. In organization studies, the use of convenience sampling in selecting study participants is a better alternative than statistically-based probability sampling since it allows for the theoretical generalization of the findings (Bryman, 1989; Calder, Phillips, & Tybout, 1981; Mohammad, Habib & Zakaria, 2010). The study participants were a sample of employees of a mining firm that was formed in the year 2004 through a merger between two firms in the Ghanaian mining industry. The selection of the participants was characterized by a sense of snowballing (Patton, 1990; Sanda, 2010) derived from the researchers' criteria that persons to be selected for the study (i.e. data sources) must be willing participants who have lived through the merger process. As a result, 200 employees were selected as study participants. These participants were drawn from the firm's Mining department, Engineering department, Processing department, Finance department, Health, Safety and Environment (HSE) department, Asset Protection department, as well as the Corporate and Human Resource department.

In this study, 31-items self-administered questionnaire (see annex I) was used as the data collection tool. The first four items in the questionnaire are demographic measures. The remaining 27 questions were characterized by issues on employees' satisfaction with their organization's merger, and the consequences of merger-induced organizational change process on employees found in the literature. As such, these 27 questions, which associated with one another, are multiple indicators of the same construct (i.e. employees' satisfaction with their organization's merger). This association provided the questionnaire with both construct and convergent validity. For each question in the questionnaire, response options were provided to which the respondents selected the option applicable to them. The questionnaire had a brief synopsis that explained the purpose of the study to the respondents.

The reliability of the questionnaire was firstly tested by piloting it among six experts who are academic staff at the University of Ghana Business School. This helped checked the stability and consistency of the items in the questionnaire. A second pilot test was conducted among twenty-five randomly selected subjects who were not included in the sample of respondents. This second piloting helped checked the readability of the questions as well as its goodness. A total of 200 questionnaires were distributed. The questionnaires were handed to each respondent by the researchers. The data was collected in the year 2009, and duration for the data collection was eight weeks.

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS:

The survey investigated employees' satisfaction with their organization's merger from the perspectives of their opinions and beliefs on the consequences of the merger-induced organizational change process on work-life and productivity. The respondents' scores from the questionnaire survey were computed by averaging across responses to the items for each answer option. All the 200 questionnaires administered were returned, representing 100% response rate. Out of this, 169 (84%) questionnaires were fully scored and found usable. Thirty-one questionnaires were rejected because they were not fully scored and therefore unusable. The data was then analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Software.

Respondents' Demography:

The length of service was of great interest because the respondents needed to be in employment at the time of the merger. Out of the 169 respondents, 100 (59%) had worked for more than 13 years, and 52 (31%) had worked for more than 7 years. The remaining 17 (10%) respondents had work for more than 5 years. From this analysis, it could be derived that majority of the respondents had worked for more than 7 years as at the time of the data collection (i.e. the year 2009) which makes it convincing that almost all the respondents were in employment the year 2002 and as such during the merger in the year 2004. By implication, the respondents could be deemed to have responded genuinely to the questionnaires about their satisfaction with the firm's merger.

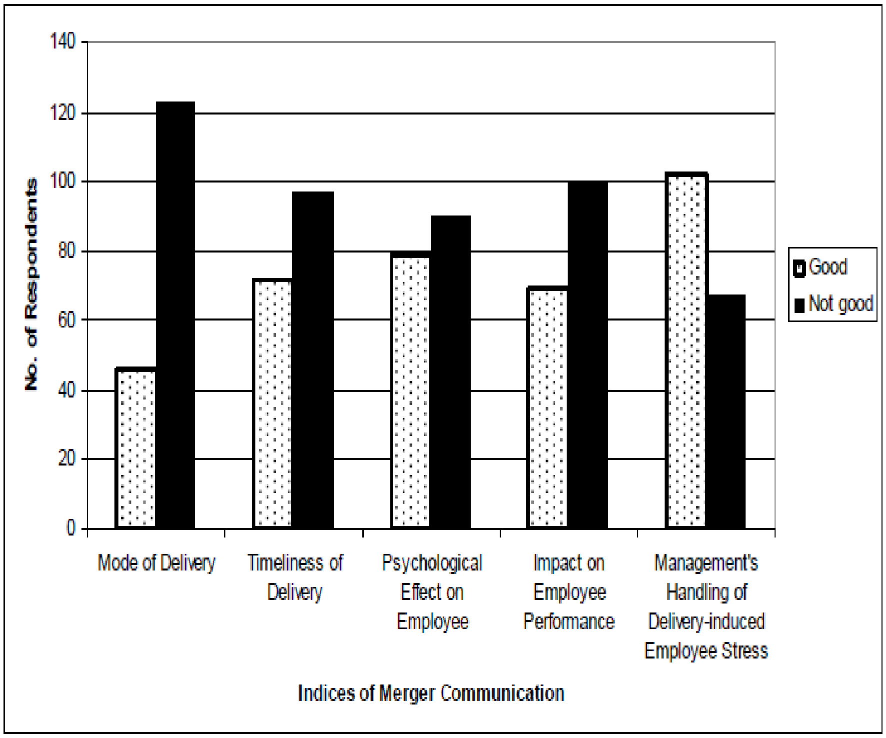
Employees' Perception of Mergers:

A merger can be said to be a tool used by companies for the purpose of expanding their operations often aiming at an increase of their long term profitability or serve as an instrument for growth and competitive advantage whereas others may simply be for survival. Thus people have different perceptions about mergers. Some believe mergers give employees the opportunity to learn and use new technologies, help develop untapped skills, competencies and build careers through training and development hence perceiving it as very favorable whereas other think otherwise. From this angle, it was of interest to find out how the respondents perceived mergers in general. The results showed that 95 (56.2%) respondents perceived the merger as good, while 53 (31.4%) perceived it as not good. Twenty-one (12.4%) respondents were unsure whether the merger was good or otherwise. This implies that though most of the employees perceived the merger as something good for the firm, a significant number of employees appeared to hold a contrary view.

Relationship between Merger Communication, Employee Anxiety and Employee Performance:

There is a general observation that employees experience a high degree of anxiety when facing the possible occurrence of mergers. This aroused the interest to find out the quality of communication and the degree to which employees became anxious and stressful upon the announcement of the merger. The respondents' perception of the anxiety generated by the merger communication and its impact on employees' performances is summarized in figure 1 below.

Figure 1. Respondents Measure of Merger Communication and Its Impact on Employee



The bar charts in the figure above describes the perceptions of the respondents on the different ways in which employee was affected when information about their old firm merging with another firm to form a new firm was relayed to them by their management. In finding out how well the merger was communicated to employees, 46 (27.2%) indicated that the merger was well communicated, but 123 (72.8%) noted that merger was not well communicated. On the accuracy and timeliness of the merger communication, 44 (26%) employees indicated that the dissemination was timely and accurate, but 81(47.9%) respondents perceived it otherwise by viewing the merger communication to be neither timely nor accurate.

Sixteen (9.5%) respondents noted that though the communication was accurate, its dissemination was not timely. Also, 28 (16.6%) respondents perceived the communication provided as not accurate, but yet perceived its dissemination as timely. From the analysis above, it can be deduced that there was some short comings in communicating the merger to employees, as highlighted by about seventy-three percent of the employees.

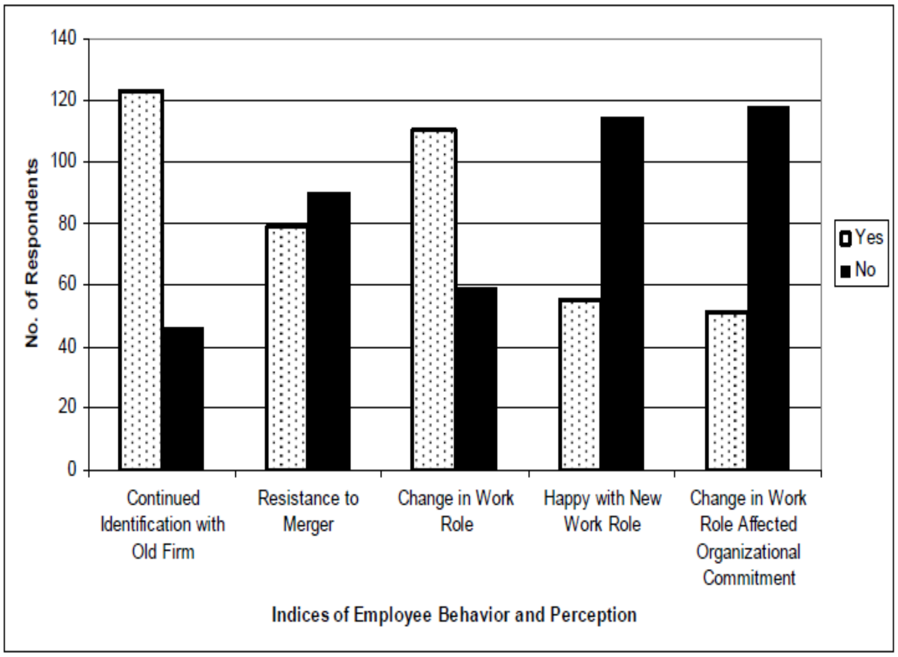
Concerning the impact that the merger communication had on the employees, 90 (52.3%) respondents indicated that they became very anxious when the merger between their old firm and another to form a new mining firm was announced. On the contrary, 79 (46.7%) respondents noted that they did not experience any form of anxiousness upon hearing about the merger. These results show that the employees were almost equally divided on the future impact of the merger on their job security. The anxiety theory explain that anxiety sets in because, mergers usually involves a large-scale organizational change with substantial uncertainty, which drives people to predict its possible negative impact on their future jobs and careers, even before actual integration occurs. This is understandable because every organizational change process has the likelihood of introducing changes in an organization’s structure, technology, business process, and management. Since these changes could have either negative or positive consequences for some employees, it cause a significant number of them to become anxious about their future, while others remain calm and confident about their future in the firm after the merger.

To find out how the anxiety affected employee performance, 100 (59.2%) respondents noted that the anxiety they developed impacted negatively on their work performances by slowing down their productiveness; since they had to spend time speculating on their survival. Sixty-nine (40.8%) respondents indicated there was no anxiety-induced effect on their performances and productivities. Concerning how the anxiety-induced employee stress was handled, 67 (39.6%) respondents indicated that the management of the stress by the firm was unsatisfactory. One hundred and two (60.4%) respondents perceived the management of the stress to be satisfactory. This analysis showed that the productivity of a significant number of employees was reduced by the anxiety and stress caused by the merger announcement.

Organizational Identity and Role Changes:

Mergers mostly involve abandoning an old organizational identity and adopting a new one. Thus, on the issue of employees' organizational identity (see figure 2 below), 123 (72.8%) respondents indicated that they strongly identified themselves with their old firm. The respondents' perception of employee behaviour towards organizational changes induced by the merger is summarized in figure 2 below.

Figure 2. Employee's behaviors towards merger-induced organizational change



The bar charts in the figure above describes the perceptions of the respondents on the different ways in which employee behavior was affected by the organizational restructuring that occurred as a result of the merger between their old firm and another firm to form a new firm. The social identity theory suggest, that employees who identify themselves more strongly to their previous organizations are more likely to feel a strong sense of loss, anger, and grief when facing mergers and thus less likely to accept the change initiative.

This stirred up the interest to find out the extent to which the employees resisted the merger-induced change initiatives. The results showed that 79 (47%) respondents offered some level of resistances to the firm's merger-induced change initiatives, while 90 (53%) respondents indicated that did not resist. This implies that a significant number of the employees were resisted the merger, probably due to poor communication and the feeling of uncertainty and stress that pervaded the work environment. Such feeling also has the tendency to orient employees towards developing group biases which could become a source of inter-organizational conflict. Mergers usually bring about disruptions in the organizational structure which results in job arrangements, creating new jobs and eliminating existing ones. There may be restructuring or delayering to help put the two organizations together. When this happens, there are likely changes in roles which may result in role ambiguity, increased workloads, confusion and other job related roles in the newly formed organization. In relation to this, it is important to know whether there merger introduced significant changes in employee work roles.

In this regard, 110 (65%) respondents acknowledged changes in their work-roles, while the remaining 59 (35%) respondents indicated otherwise. This implies that in mergers, changes do occur in the work system, but yet still, some work roles are likely to be maintained, as it appeared to have been the case for about thirty-five percent of the firm's employees whose work roles remained unaltered). It is therefore inferred that there were significant changes in the work roles of majority of employees due to the harmonization of the different business process and policies of the old firms that merged to form the new firm. However, employees may like or dislike their new work roles for various reasons. Thus to find out the extent to which the employees liked their new work roles, 55 (32.5%) respondents indicated their satisfaction, while 114 (67.5%) respondents were dissatisfied. The indication here is that the employees were not pleased with the changes that the merger brought to their previous work roles, and this might have probably impacted on their commitment to the new firm. Thus understanding the employees' commitment was of interest. Fifty-one (30.2%) respondents indicated that changes in the firm did not affect their organizational commitment, while 118 (69.8%) respondents noted that their commitment was lowered by the changes, in one way or the other. This result depicts the employees to have been economical in their organizational commitments to the new firm.

DISCUSSIONS:

Organizations merge for several reasons such as, to enhance corporate performance, ensure economies of scale, for expansion in size, reduces overhead cost of capital and enhancing earning per share and reduce tax payment. Merger activities present a different set of challenge for the human resource managers in both acquiring and acquired organizations. The result has shown that the firm faced a number of challenges which ranged from human resource issues, culture as well as training issue. These challenges are found to have serious impact on the performance of the employees most especially during the period of transition. The result also showed that mergers affect organizations in variety of ways, with people management implications that could potentially impact on employee satisfaction. This means that close attention must be given to people issues during and after mergers is very important to keep motivation at its peak. As it is indicative from the results, the level of employee satisfaction with the merger was not encouraging. This could be viewed from the angel of poor communication of the merger, poor management of employee stress by management, unfair treatment in terms of both distributive and procedural. A low level of commitment was also another stance of the dissatisfaction. This in turn did affect employee attitude toward work, productivity as well as high turnover rate in the organization after the merger.

It is also indicative from the results that the provision of good communication is essential for mergers as a means for enhancing employee satisfaction. As Armstrong (2003) argued, change can be managed only by ensuring that, the reasons for and implications of the change are communicated to those affected in ways in which they will understand and accept. Effective employee communication though very difficult to achieve, is one of the most important things to consider during mergers. Since it is human nature for employees to want to know what is happening in their organizations, they become anxious and then stressful when they sense that important information that could significantly impact on their future well-being is being hidden by their management. Anxiety causes employees to indulge in various survival-seeking behaviors' which affect their performances and productivities negatively. Generally, employees experience a high degree of anxiety when they are faced with the possible occurrence of mergers (Cartwright & Cooper, 1993; Ivancevich, et al., 1987).

The semblance of employee resistance highlighted by the results could be due to problems of organizational identity and its influencing impact on employee perceptions and behaviours. Arguing alongside Greenberg (1987), employees with identity issues may pay close attention to how decisions are made and how people are treated, and then relate the inherent fairness to what pertained in their old firms. As it was highlighted in the results, such employee perception of unfairness may negatively affect their satisfaction, commitment, and trust, and intention to stay after a merger (Dailey & Kirk, 1992; McFarlin & Sweeney, 1992). It could also influence their attitudes and behaviours resulting in them developing psychological withdrawals with a consequential turnover for the firm (Fried, Tiegs, Naughton, & Ashforth, 1996; Gutknecht & Keys, 1993). It is indicative from the results that changing employees' role was also another source of dissatisfaction. Here, it could be deduced that employees were not conversant with new ways of carrying out their job functions, or that, they were so much acquainted to their old ways of doing things. Introduction of role ambiguity and conflict is another obvious source of stress, which may lead to lower work motivation and higher job dissatisfaction (Igbaria & Guimaraes, 1993; Sims & Szilagyi, 1975).These changes in roles are often a result of structural and/or cultural and/or job re-arrangements, and also the creation of new arrangements within the organization.

The findings have therefore showed that change management creates human resource issues and in mergers, employees may be dealing with feelings of loss; which they have to cope with uncertainty, anxiety, possible geographic relocation, change in career path, and alterations in work practices. The issue of survival becomes an obsession and has repercussion on the family. As a result of these, employees may lose previous organizational status, loyalty, commitment, hopes and promises for the future as well as job dissatisfaction. The findings established that, employees experienced similar problems during the merger which has impacted on their performance and their level of satisfaction at the workplace. It is important that management understand these issues and its implication on both the individual and the organization as a whole. Employees are said to be greatest assets and no matter how efficient your technology or resources may be it will not match the effectiveness and efficiency of staff hence, a highly motivated staff is worth in attaining corporate goals and also determine the standard and output of the organization. An insufficient investment in people issues are indicating factors of merger failure. Management of the human side of mergers is the real key towards maximizing the value of the merger deals.

The issue of employee satisfaction can then be said to be important in the area of mergers and must be given the needed attention. This is because, irrespective of the brilliance of the vision and the fit in a merger, the subsequent success of the deal depends mostly on the employees. They are the ones whose day-to-day actions can make a merger work or can sink it after the deal is done.

IMPLICATIONS:

The study has shown that mergers have several implications for both workers and the organization itself. It could also be seen that human resource issues are the most neglected ones. Ironically; studies have shown that most of the mergers fail to bring out the desired outcomes due to people related issues. These people related issues which usually crop up are as a result of poorly managed human resource issues and it suggests that managing mergers and acquisition-related organizational change is a complex and difficult task; perhaps the task is more difficult and complicated than any other types of large-scale organizational change, because it needs to simultaneously address both the intra-organizational dynamics of leading a large-scale organizational change and the inter-organizational dynamics of blending two distinctive organizations into one. This implies that mergers-related organizational change is also distinguished from other types of organizational change, having its own unique dynamics and processes.

CONCLUSION:

A major finding of this research is the importance of leadership in the entire change process. The leader is expected to spearhead the development of vision, planning, setting strategy, build organizational culture and teams. The study has revealed that people issues are important in every change process especially in mergers. These issues if not well handled, may impact on employee satisfaction which has repercussions on productivity and even the success of the merger. Based on this it is concluded that employee satisfaction to a merger situation could enhanced by.

- Instituting effective two way communication and increase in accountability and timely response to employees needs is one of the ways to help reduce stress and anxiety in the merger process.
- Encouraging employees to participate in job redesign processes. This helps to reduce possible resistance and to maintain a positive attitude during the merger transition. This will also help to sustain or increase employees' job satisfaction and organizational commitment.
- Training employees to adjust to job changes as well as help develop new skills and capabilities to meet changing demands of the work requirement and improve performance to meet work expectations.
- Fostering multiculturalism in which both organizational cultures are equally valued and integrated especially when both organizations have strong and distinctive cultures.
- Facilitating intercultural learning is another suggested approach to reduce acculturative stress and conflicts.
- Intercultural presentations and workshops have been considered as a useful method.
- Handling very well the issue of organizational justice. First of all, perceptions of unfairness can be substantially reduced by allowing equal participation of employees from both organizations in making important decisions including employee displacement and by using objective criteria in developing new human resource management procedures in the newly merged organizations in particular, handling displaced employees with fairness and respect.

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