

WORK ENVIRONMENT AND ITS RIPPLING EFFECTS

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Abstract:

In the modern era, organizations are facing several challenges due to the dynamic nature of the environment. On the one hand, many practitioners consider working environment as an extra, resource-consuming, non-productive activity, which managers dislike because of the lack of production stemming from it. On the other hand, some argue that productivity and the urge to increase productivity is the major source of malfunctioning working environment, because it raises the bar of what is expected of workers without necessarily giving them extra means or resources to handle this. But one of the many challenges for a business is to satisfy its employees in order to cope up with the ever changing and evolving environment and to achieve success and remain in competition. In order to increase efficiency, effectiveness, productivity and job commitment of employees, the business must satisfy the needs of its employees by providing good working conditions and environment. This paper is a secondary research which throws light on the important components of work environment, the benefits of good work environment to the businesses. It also provides the glimpse of the impact of work environment on other key human resource factors like skill transfer of employees after training in the workplace, productivity and performance of employees, employee's intention to quit, job satisfaction and employee's absenteeism.

Key words: Work environment, skill transfer, productivity, quitting intention, job satisfaction, absenteeism.

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INTRODUCTION:

Work is central of the lives of every human being. In current economies, people spend most of their waking lives (i.e. when they not sleeping) at the workplace, and even sleep less because of work. Contemporary employees have only a few hours of sleep, and spend the rest of the 24 hours on work or work-related activities. This suggests that the work environment must be safe and friendly to promote healthy workforce. But work environment mean different things to different people. So, what is meant by work environment? According to Tripathi (2014) the work environment can be defined as the environment in which people work that include physical setting, job profile, culture and market condition. Each aspect is inter linked and impacts on employees overall performance and productivity. It is the quality of the employees' workplace environment that most impacts on their level of motivation subsequently performance. Work environment can be thought of simply as the environment in which people work as such; but it is a very broad category that encompasses the physical setting like heat, equipment, characteristics of the job itself like workload, task complexity. It also encompasses broader organizational features like culture, history and even aspects of the external organizational setting like local labour market conditions, industry sector, and work life balance.

NUTSHELL OF KEY WORK ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS:

Leadership

According to Adair, 2002 Leadership is defined as the process where an individual influences a group under his subordination by the use of his skills, knowledge, and expertise to achieve various objectives such as attaining a high-performance level and monitoring of employees, keeping employees motivated, and achieving organizational goals. It also means ensuring employees are able to deal with any organizational change and honing their ability to focus on long-term results. The leadership role is important to the building of positive inter-personal relations and self-confidence of individuals on a personal level, which means it is important for companies to hire highly skilled and knowledgeable individuals in these roles. As such, individuals with knowledge and past experience of working in such a capacity are preferably hired to fulfil this role.

Organizational Culture

The arrangement of attributes that vary from one organization to another is what is referred to as culture. It is a set of beliefs, behaviours, values, and knowledge of a group of people at the same time and place. Coordination between employees within a department as well as in the organization as a whole, coordination and integration of operations, and strategy are aided by organizational culture, also leading to better resource usage and support. Additionally, it also allows the management to predict employee behaviour in a number of different situations that can be advantageous to the wellbeing of both employees and dynamics of work relations within a company (Ogbonna, 1993).

Training and development:

Training and development refers to the process of training employees with an aim to develop their skills and increase overall productivity, usually in the form of multiple planned and systematic activities which increase the level of skill, competency, and knowledge vital to performing assigned duties well within the organization (Gordon, 1992). Proper training of employees positively influences their performance and enhances their skills, knowledge, and ability to perform their tasks (Appiah, 2010).

Rewards and Incentives:

Benefits that employees receive from their employer for completing a certain task or responsibility beyond their salary are called rewards, and are a key element for their motivation, increasing levels of productivity, as well as playing a certain role in employee retention. Rewards can take many shapes, such as cash, verbal or written praise, recognition, a combination of these, or something else entirely. Rewards end up linking the interests of employees with the team, in most cases being the source of enhanced performance, leading to the achievement of organizational goals. A change in the reward system will have a direct effect on the motivation of employees. For instance, if the reward system or scale is improved, it will have a positive impact on the motivation of employees, and vice versa (Hafiza, Shah, Jamsheed, & Zaman, 2011).

Stress:

Stress is a negative emotion experienced by humans, evident from physical and psychological behaviour changes that usually occur when individuals face difficulty managing their tasks, colleagues, timeframes, or simply coping in their surroundings. Stress has a negative impact on the performance of an individual, and if left unattended, can affect the overall performance of the team and department as well.

Physical work environment:

The physical working environment is crucial in driving workers job satisfaction and productivity. Many studies are based on the physical environment and its impact on the human resources of the company as it relates to things such as, lighting, aesthetics of interior spaces and noise levels. Poor work conditions drive higher costs and decrease the performance of the organization leading to lower productivity and higher costs. Researches performed by Abdul, revealed that when poor conditions increased they added stress to the work environment and in turn lead to unbearable workloads and higher turnover. This was also made evident by Fassoulis and Alexopoulos (2015), stating the same result, that a poor work environment has not only proven reduction in job satisfaction and productivity, but also increases in absenteeism, depression, burnout, musculoskeletal disorders and so on. Moreover, noise is the most disturbing factor and affects the efficiency of the operator by distracting the concentration on the job. The probability (or risk) of accident occurrence increases when the environment is noisy. The noise often produces vibration, which causes the machine breakdown and imbalance in pressure of surrounding air.

WHY WORK ENVIRONMENT IS THE KEY TO BUSINESS'S SUCCESS?

- A strong teamwork requires a supportive work environment in which everyone works well together and truly values one another. A supportive culture of a company is vital to finding new answers to business challenges and new opportunities from unique insights.
- A strong culture in the organisation improves the work environment and enhances the retention rate of employees in the businesses. When employee retention is low, the organization faces an expensive intellectual and monetary loss. Research studies suggest that building a healthier work environment where, employees trust the organization, feel pride in their work, and

enjoy the atmosphere and the people they work with intern increases employee retention, devotion and efficiency. Further, employees will stick around if there is a room for advancement and growth.

- Managers are finding that a flexible and healthier work environment significantly cuts down absenteeism in the company, if executed properly. Flexible work environments help employees to work from home. If appropriate accountability systems are in place, a flexible work environment has the potential to be more favourable, not only for the whole profitability of the business, but for the better customer service as well.
- Employees who work in friendly and flexible environments are more likely to talk about their companies on social media, and are more likely to express pride in their organizations.
- Employee morale is also directly tied to the workplace environment. If the work environment is more stressful, the impact of this will be stressed and dissatisfied employees in the work place. The more stressed and dissatisfied employees are in the workplace, the productivity are more likely to drop. In contrast, a happy employee means fruitful and conducive output in a healthy and productive work environment.
- A business with a strong work environment will possess shared values, and thus, it can execute strategies in a better way, by giving guidelines to the employees, to achieve shared company goals.

There are several reasons why businesses need to create and nurture a healthy work environment, not the least of which is to retain their employees and be able to attract the best talent.

WORK ENVIRONMENT ON LEARNING TRANSFER OF SKILLS:

A lack of skilled workers harms the economy, according to many sources. Without a skilled workforce, manufacturers cannot continue to be the drivers of innovation and will not be successful in the global economy. Organisational environments where employees are able and motivated to learn, assess their skill sets against job requirements, and pursue a program that align the skill sets with requirements, is the best option for effective skills management. The organisations need to provide training programs in-house or help the employee undergo relevant external training programs. Creating such an environment is also an important part of skillsmanagement.

Baldwin and Ford (1988) showed that transfer of learning factors varies with each environment. According to Grossman and Salas (2011), environmental factors help determine whether trainees demonstrate learnt behaviour once they return to the work environment. Work environment is a factor that obstructs, reduces and promotes the transfer of learning. Therefore, it is up to the trainees whether they use the opportunity provided by their work environment to enhance their work performance or not. If they do not fully utilise such opportunity, they cannot transfer what they have learnt at the training.

Lim and Morris (2006) divided the work environment into two related factors, working system and people. The factors attributed to a working system, are the opportunities to use knowledge and skills. The people factor related to supervisors, who are critical in ensuring the success of learning transfer. Instructors, supervisors, employers and training institutions must improve the transfer of learning skills through the work environment. One factor related to the work environment is the reward system; installing a proper reward system for successful use of new skills would greatly improve the transfer of learning skills among trainees. Effective communication in the work place also allows supervisors or instructors to provide feedback on work performance, to initiate positive discussion, to provide relevant explanation through clear direction and to deliver learning outcomes. Supervisors or instructors also need to emphasise guidance to ensure that the trainees can apply their learning outcomes in the workplace.

WORK ENVIRONMENT AND EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE, PRODUCTIVITY:

The work place environment in a majority of industry is unsafe and unhealthy. It could be because of poorly designed workstations, unsuitable furniture, lack of ventilation, inappropriate lighting, excessive noise, insufficient safety measures in fire emergencies and lack of personal protective equipment. Employees working in such environment are prone to occupational disease and it has impacts on employee's performance. Thus productivity is decreased due to the workplace environment.

Thus, the management must take an active role in not only defining the physical environment of the workplace and making it conducive for workers and should also alter the management style to suit the employees. This refers to changing aspects like ethics, behaviour, commitment, professionalism, drive and interpersonal relations in employees for the better.

In the contemporary world, the managers need to spend more time on controlling these factors of the work environment rather than micromanage. For this, he needs to

- allocate adequate authority to employees
- Delegate responsibilities
- Increase their accountability
- Encourage teamwork

The manager must curb the tendency to micromanage and instead display that he has confidence in the ability of his team members and trusts them to do their work efficiently. If he treats his subordinates as professionals then there is no reason that they should not behave in that way. Such an attitude promotes trust and loyalty among the employees and encourages better teamwork among them. Besides, they develop a sense of ownership towards the company. Creating a work environment in which employees are productive is essential to increased profits for organization, corporation or small business. Principles of management that dictate how, exactly, to maximize employee productivity centre around two major areas of focus: personal motivation and the infrastructure of the work environment.

JafarAkbari (2013) has examined the relationship between noise and lighting level with human productivity in automotive assembly industry. The results have shown that in machining, production, Pride assembly, Nissan assembly, drilling, and welding units, the amount of noise level was more than national or international standards (>85 dB). Also total lighting including natural and artificial lightings was less than the standard amounts in production, warehouse, Nissan assembly, and techno engineering units. The results gained from analysis of Pearson correlation coefficient have shown that there is a significant relationship. The relationship was reverse between noise level and human productivity. Thus it is clear that there is decrease in productivity due to increase of noise. It is found in the study that lighting amount does not have any influence on human productivity of automobile parts assembly unit and also its changes do not have any influence on productivity of other people in other units. So, in order to increase employee productivity, noise control reduction to less than the standard values (less than 85 dB) was recommended.

WORK ENVIRONMENT AND EMPLOYEES' INTENTION TO QUIT:

The work environment has most significant effect on the employees' decision to quit. Employees are significantly less likely to intend to quit their job if they perceive it to be a good working environment. The majority of employees who thought of leaving their job perceived their workplace to not be a good place to work. Good quality of the work environment was indicated by low stress levels, feeling appreciated by management and not feeling threatened. Researches done on work environment and its impact on employees' intention to quit, confirmed that an employee is more likely to want to leave if they are not a parent, believe that they do not receive enough important information in time, are stressed and experience a reduction in the level of job satisfaction. The impact of these factors on the desire to quit differs in magnitude depending on whether the Quality of Work Environment is rated as being good or bad. In workplaces with a good Quality of Work Environment, the impact of high stress levels, lack of information on important decisions, and decreases in satisfaction are much greater on employees' intention to quit.

Consequently, if the employee perceives that they work in a good work environment then a business can dissuade them from thinking about quitting their job by ensuring that their level of job satisfaction does not decrease; by continually providing the employee with information about important decisions, changes and future plans in due time; and by ensuring that the employee is not overly stressed with work issues. Organisations that wish to retain their quality workforce should adopt a two-stage approach. They should focus initially on achieving a good QWE without high stress levels and with perceptions of appreciation by management and a lack of threats at work. These prior interventions are essential to reduce later quitting intentions and should be implemented before expending effort on adjusting factors that contribute to job satisfaction and increasing the provision of information to employees of important decision making processes. Thus, retaining low levels of stress remain important in the second stage.

WORK ENVIRONMENT AND JOB SATISFACTION:

Chandrasekar (2011) argue that an organization needs to pay attention to create a work environment that enhances the ability of employees to become more productive in order to

increase profits for organization. He also argued that Human to human interactions and relations are playing more dominant role in the overall job satisfaction rather than money whereas management skills, time and energy, all are needed for improving the overall performance of the organization in current era.

Abdul and Raheela (2014) to study the impact of work environment on job satisfaction collected data through a self-administered survey questionnaire from the target population which consists of educational institutes, banking sector and telecommunication industry. Simple random sampling is used for collection of data from 210 employees. The results indicate a positive relationship between working environment and employee job satisfaction. The study reveals that bad working conditions restrict employees to portray their capabilities and attain full potential, so it is imperative that the businesses realize the importance of good working environment.

This study impacts upon the future performance of businesses by taking working environment more seriously within their organizations to increase the motivation and commitment level of their employees. This way their work force can achieve better results. It also ensures that the employees of the organization will have the ease of working in a relaxed and free environment without burden or pressure that would cause their performance to decline. The progress that will be achieved in the business will directly help the economy of a country as developmental efforts will increase. In such conditions, the country will be able to handle the minor problems prevailing as it will be in a strong state to deal with them. The benefits of providing a good working environment to the employees are tremendous for both the organization and its employees.

Working environments where employees are made a part of the overall decision making process, being given flexible working hours, less work load, a team work approach and a supportive top management have positive impact on the performance of employees. This leads to high level of employee job satisfaction thus making the employees more committed towards their business, more motivated to work hard and more inclined to get high productivity for their firms benefiting their respective businesses in the long run.

WORK ENVIRONMENT AND EMPLOYEE ABSENTEEISM:

If a worker is tired from physical exhaustion or cannot bear the psychological pressure at work, he or she is more likely to be absent from work than a person working in an environment of better quality. Both the physical and psychological aspects of the work situation are assumed to influence the decision regarding going to work on a given day, and cause both voluntary and involuntary absences. The physical aspect can also induce injuries and then sickness absence. Bad working conditions have an indirect impact on absenteeism through the individual's health status.

The working environment includes issues such as temperature and comfort, lighting, noise and general surroundings. When any one of these working conditions is substandard they can affect the health of the workers. Improvements in the work environment will reduce the negative health effects on the current workers and therefore lower absenteeism. Incidents of layoffs increase women's short-term absence and geographical moving has a similar effect. Relocations of firms are believed to lead to work environment challenges.

Increased unemployment rate reduces short-term absenteeism. Increased use of overtime increases short-term absence. Use of overtime may be a measure of required work-effort. It was found through various research studies that firms characterized with much noise and high physical strain should pay the workers more to avoid shirking. In periods of layoffs, special attention should be put on the situation for female workers as their short-term absence rates tend to increase in periods after layoffs. In addition, if firms plan to relocate, they should be aware of the risk for higher health related absenteeism for their female workers. High physical strain also indicates higher long-term absence, and obviously, effort to reduce the strain may improve the worker's health. The results reveal that investing in the work environment may affect absence rates and given the costs of absenteeism it may be profitable to pay the worker higher wages to compensate for poor working conditions.

CONCLUSION:

Workplace environment plays a vital role in motivating, retaining, exciting employees to perform their assigned work. Since money is not a sufficient motivator in encouraging the workplace

performance required in today's competitive business environment, managers and supervisors will need to be comfortable with working with the whole gamut of workplace factors that influence employee performance and behaviour. Few studies reveals that certain factors within in the work environment also makes the workers more creative in the work place and its further enhances employee engagement. Thus in order to succeed and compete in the competitive world, it becomes more imperative for the businesses to focus on the work environment.

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