

# A Theoretical Exposition of Workers Attitude in Industrial Workplace

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## ABSTRACT

Strategies bordering on organizational performance are generally based on finance, marketing and production. Where the human aspect is considered, little emphasis is placed on the strategic importance of employee attitude in realizing organizational goals. This study explored the importance of workers attitude and how it affects different aspects of organizational life including a review of employee work attitude in Nigeria and parts of Africa. The study identified different work attitudes and manifestation of wholesome attitudes that promote organizational health. It was recommended that organizations should create an environment where positive work attributes thrive so that employee and organizational goal can be realized.

## INTRODUCTION

In organizations, employee knowledge, competencies and skills play a major role in the realization of corporate objectives. However these may not be sufficient as employees disposition or attitude towards work, the company culture or fellow workers can be inimical to an organization's health. Workers that display wholesome attitude tend to be more productive and align themselves to the norms and values of the organization. Bianca (2017) is of the view that poor work attitude can result in absenteeism and turnover. Managers and owners are interested in employee attitude because of its impact on different work outcomes. Chrisma, (2006) observed that in the workplace employees with positive attitude do better than those with negative attitude and suggest that managers should track attitudes and discourage negativity and laziness.

Akenbor and Ujadughele (2010) claimed that the success of any organization depends on workers' attitude among other factors. Attitudes are important because they affect job behaviour. When employees' attitudes are unfavourable towards management, supervisors and the entire organization, attempts must be made to understand and change them into favourable ones to enhance employees' performance. Attitudes offer a good measure of job satisfaction. Research evidence indicates that individuals who hold positive attitude towards their jobs and the organization are generally satisfied with their jobs. Similarly, those who are satisfied tend to hold positive attitudes about their jobs and the organization (Akenbor & Ujadughele, 2010).

As an organization continues to grow, both in terms of human and material resources, and in other activities generally, the tendency exists for such an organization to begin to devise ways and means of controlling the workplace more rigidly. Some of the aftermath of rigid pattern of work control in organizations has in the past led to problems associated with work-related attitude of the individual employee at work.

There are diverse views from previous studies on the influence of workers' attitude on the productivity of an employee in the industrial workplace. It is upon this premise that we intend to explore the nature of workers attitude in the industrial workplace.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Koontz and O'Donnell (1996) described attitude as the predisposition to act or not to act in a certain way. Bittel (1998) defines it as a personal readiness to react in a predetermined way. It is therefore a mental position regarding a state. However, Lambert and Lambert (1964) in Jaja (2005) defined attitude as a structured and regular way of reasoning, perceiving and relating to human beings, developments, occurrences in one's location. It is generally made up of our thinking, beliefs and our propensity to react. But Reich and Adcock (2002) argued that it is a method of wholesome and unwholesome assessments, deep seated feelings and predisposition towards evaluative response.

It is generally accepted that attitude has three components: cognitive, affective and behavioral. Each of the components constitutes a different way an individual can react to some objects. This is based on the

understanding that attitude always imply a subject-relationship. The object could be people, inanimate objects, occurrences, work or even concepts such as government policies or religious principles. Cognitive components relate to the individual's belief. Beliefs depend on available data; therefore differences in beliefs can be caused by differences in information received by different people. A worker may feel that his new boss can improve his lot based on information available to him. An affective component is the emotional content that arouses pleasant and/or unpleasant feelings. These may be affected by social norms, and personality traits. It is important to note that it is sometimes difficult to draw a line of demarcation between cognitive and affective components. Chrisman (2006) rightly noted that many statements of knowledge or belief may indicate an individual's feelings in the sense of his likes and dislikes. For instance, his superior, a worker may say that he is a good man. This is an expression relating to the quality of the supervisor.

Behavioural component is that content which disposes one to take action of some kind that is in readiness to display particular behaviour towards a specific object. Behaviour component is the earliest to perceive, as it is the outward reflection or consequence of the first two components. The three components of attitude are said to be consistent with each other, if the individual beliefs and tendencies towards an object reflect his feelings towards this same object in some way. Thus, if an individual has favourable feelings and beliefs about an object then both are consistent with each other. Also, if an individual has a favourable disposition to act towards an object and he also has favourable feelings towards it, then the action tendencies are said to be consistent with his feelings. Consequent upon the above therefore, an individual is said to have an attitude when his feelings, beliefs and action tendencies are consistent (Gartenstein, 2017).

### **Attitudes Required in the Industrial Workplace**

According to Belcher (2017), there are some key attitudes that managers in the industrial workplace when identified believe will promote cordiality and productivity. These workers' attitudes include:

**Respectfulness** – This is a significant attribute that goes beyond the way workers relate with their managers. Respect should be extended to fellow workers, clients and those who patronize the company's products. From observation, those who show this attitude still relate well with others who see things differently.

**Pridefulness** – While being prideful seems to be a bad disposition at work, many workers who have that disposition turn out to be very good at their job. Contrary to popular belief that employees who are prideful are self-sufficient and lone players, they are known to be team players and do seek and accept assistance from colleagues.

**Commitment** – This is one of the most important attitude that is desired in the workplace. Firms of all sizes desire workers who show commitment to the objectives and vision of their employer and their jobs. Commitment to the organization can be seen in employees going the extra mile to efficiently perform their duties through the generation of new ideas to make the company competitive.

**Innovation** – Innovative employees keep an organization going as new ideas, inventions and better methods of managing ensures organizational survival. Some firms promote attitude of innovation by creating an environment where risk taking and creativity is encouraged and rewarded. Employees that are innovative usually believe in putting their ideas to the test rather let it die.

### **Importance of Positive Attitude at the Industrial Workplace**

Generally, a positive mental attitude lifts a person's spirit. This attitude can boost a workers health and increase productivity and personal relationships.

The manifestations of positive attitude at the industrial workplace as identified by Boehlke (2017) include:

**Hope** – This involves the belief that expected outcome will turnout positively especially after having done ones best. A hopeful disposition enables one to handle challenges with the expectation that end result will be successful. To cultivate the attitude of hope, employees should practice handling challenging but achievable assignments.

**Optimism** – This is being positive and having a favourable disposition towards expected outcomes. An attitude of optimism is good for an organization because it energies worker to give off their best and expect the best no matter how unfavourable prevailing conditions might seem.

**Resiliency** – It refers to the ability to ride the crest of challenging situations and survive. Resilience can be viewed from the dimensions of challenge, control and commitment. Commitment involves the willingness to stick to a goal rather than giving up. Control is the ability to take charge of difficult situation by coming up with

alternative routes to solving the problem. Challenge is the capacity to identify learning opportunities when faced with difficult situation.

### **Acquisition and Modification of Workers' Attitude**

Individuals acquire attitudes in different ways and when reinforced, they are maintained. Reitz (1981) gave three ways in which attitudes are acquired: through direct experience with the objects, association and learning from others.

**Direct experience with the object:-** Attitudes can develop from a personal rewarding or punishing experience with an object A worker who has had an unpleasant encounter with an executive can develop a negative attitude towards the executive and his performance of job assigned to him by such executive may be affected.

**Association:-** Attitude towards an object can develop from associating that object with another object about which attitudes have been previously formed.

**Learning from others:-** Attitudes may also develop from what a person is told by other about an object towards that object. A worker with negative attitude towards women executive, either as a result of his experience or his behalf and background could assign such negative attitude to a co-worker.

To Chisnall (1975), attitudes may be acquired or modified by influences arising from four principal sources; information exposure, group membership, environment and want satisfaction.

**Information exposure:-** People are exposed through variety of information from the environment. These shape attitudes to objects. Although some the information may be ignored others may be used or taken reliability.

**Group membership:-** Attitudes are also formed from membership of groups to which individual is affiliated. A group signifies a number of people who interact with one another. Opinions are shared by members of group and so the individual is affected by behaviors. Such groups are the primary and reference groups. Primary groups are one's family, friends and work mates. Reference groups are any other group the individual closely identifies himself with. People join groups whose behavior patterns attracts them.

**Want satisfaction:-** Attitudes are influenced by the wants of individuals and by the degree of satisfaction that they tolerate Attitudes guide behaviour so that needs can be satisfied without persistent evaluation of eve human activity. When needs are well satisfied, favourable attitudes will be formed.

In the work situation, attitude change describes a situation where the relationships of a particular group of workers to a job assignment task are different to what were previously. Attitudes change and the benefits of being able to induce it are therefore of obvious interest to managers.

According to Chisnal (1975), attitude may change in a direction that reinforces the present attitudinal position: this is termed congruent change. A favourable attitude towards a superior may be re-informed by his affirmative response to a genuine request by a subordinate for promotion. On the other hand Chisnal (1975) stated that a mildly unfavorable attitude may move to one of distinct disapproval.

Further, it has been shown that workers show instrument attachment to work. In other words, the worker thus works for money. To Marx, the extrinsic instrumental relationship to work is alienating. Weber (1964) in his concept of power and the structure of control, through which power is exercised, is actually talking about curbing alienation. For instance, he placed emphasis on the ownership of the material means of production which are of several kinds such as technical factors that separate the individual worker from the ownership of the means of production. Blauner (1964) in Johnnie (2002) would refer to this condition powerlessness exhibited by the alienated worker.

What may be concluded here is that there is no const as to a common meaning of alienation. At best, it has become an arena for intellectual explanation of the consequences of the modem industry. It has become a shorthand interpretation of the impact of the industrial revolution on the manual work. In this discourse, we have provided a working definition of alienation, arguing that alienation has to do with different objective condition and subjective feelings resulting from some sort of relationships that workers and the socio-technical settings of employment go into. Feelings of alienation is experienced as soon as the workers begin to lose control of their

immediate work processes and as such, become less involved in work activity as a mode of personal self-expression.

### **Productive Capacity of the African Worker**

Since the African worker works in an environment totally different from the western environment, it is important to focus more attention on the African industrial workplace. So much has been written about the African worker and his bad attitude to work (Ejiofor, 1981). Several reasons have been given for this. Some argue that the African thought system is basically different from those of his Western counterpart and that managers have not incorporated these thought-patterns into their managerial kit. The resultant effect is the low productivity of the workers. Others say that the Nigerian worker has certain basic needs, which have not been met, and as long as they remain unsatisfied according to Maslow's need theory. The productive capacity of the African worker will not be fully realized. Yet others (National Concord Editorial of a couple of years' back) enumerated the reasons for the low productivity to include in particular: cumbersome bureaucracy, inadequate accountability and gross underdevelopment account for low productivity in the public service. Government's inconsistent fiscal and other policies account for low labour and industrial productivity in the private sector (Ejiofor, 1981).

In totality, low motivation, high cost of living and the persistent inadequacy of the basic infrastructure needed to maintain a decent living all contribute to the low productivity of the entire labour force. Because of the concern of the low productivity level of the Nigerian worker, the Federal Government in 1991 declared that every February 21, should mark the National Productivity Day to focus public attention on the challenges of enhancing the average worker's productivity for the overall growth of the economy. But the question is, is that the right solution to the problem? Definitely, not, at best it will create awareness on a massive scale that such a problem exists and at worst, it will complicate matters the more if the solutions or suggestions are wrong or the right ones are not implemented. It will become another government pronouncement that will come and go without any impact.

While we accept that productivity is generally difficult to measure especially at the national level, alt available standard parameters indicate that the average Nigerian worker does not, as yet, measure up to the demands of rapid economic development. The conclusion we are inclined to draw from the foregoing literature is that Nigerian industrial worker is likely to be terribly alienated Present conditions of service especially for those in the public service are alienating. The general down turn in the economy and high cost of living force workers to look for other additional means of livelihood. Consequently, the worker is emotionally separated and detached from his main employment. Ahiauzu (1999) has therefore suggested that any move towards the understanding of the poor attitude to work of the African, which will enable organizational theorists to develop the appropriate administrative and managerial systems for African organizations, should start with the identification of the influences that shape the behaviour of the African at the workplace. We completely support this view and it is in that belief that the present study was initially conceived.

Studies have also shown Africans to have instrumental attitude to the industrial workplace. In his study of work alienation of workers in Nairobi, Kenya, Blunt (1983) in Jaja (2005), reports of a night watchman who had this to say,

*"I have no choice but to come to town because I need money. Why should a man undergo such hardship for any other reason? I must help my family. If that means working every day, I will do it. I cannot let my family down".*

This report revealed that technology will play a very minimal part in workers such as the night watchman and definitely this is not an isolated case in the African context. Widespread alienation has been found among the Zambian copper miners (Burawoy, 1973). Blunt (1983) in Jaja (2005) thus conclude by arguing that the conditions which prevail in African urban organizational contexts are conducive to the development of widespread alienation. For example, as a result of the very high Levels of unemployment in Africa's urban centres, skilled workers who are lucky enough to find a job cling to it, in many cases irrespective of the conditions they encounter in the workplace. Apart from dangerous and unhealthy physical working environments, unskilled workers must frequently endure insults and a lack of consideration from superiors and employers, and low levels of pay. Their experiences of powerlessness, meaninglessness, self-estrangement and normlessness are therefore likely to be severe and long lasting.

The above extract goes to say that even where the whole work environment is alienated (insult, low level of pay, lack of consideration from superiors and employers), the African have learnt to endure. In other words, they may have even become immune to the negative feelings of alienation so that they can hardly notice that such conditions exist. Awareness is created or consciousness awakened if the work is dangerous and unhealthy.

### **Mechanisms of Attitude Change**

Ejiorfor (1981) and Johnnie (2002), identified the following mechanisms for attitude change:

1. Management attempt participation decision-making of the target individuals. The participative management approach which involves employees in decision making affecting their jobs creates more positive job attitudes.
2. Providing individuals with new information which changes their set of beliefs. If the manager can alter belief structures, then subsequent attitude change can be effected. An important point to note in relation to the provision of new information is in effecting attitude change is that such information must come from a credible or accurate source. This is the issue of hierarchy of credibility.
3. Communication managers often try to change behaviour by influencing others, and influence requires a communication. The two-way communication is usually more effective and this should be encouraged in attitude change situation.
4. Pressure group- Social pressure is a potent technique for behaviour change. In an organization for example, the informal group exercise considerable influence on members. An employee may face social pressure from his group membership counter to those of the manager.
5. Position discrepancy: Discrepancy between an individual's present position toward something and the position advanced by others. This can cause the individual to change to others' positions.

### **CONCLUSION**

The importance of work related attitude cannot be overemphasized because of its ability to enhance employees' performance. Attitude is very vital in achieving organizational success and excellent customer service delivery and accounts for why the success of an organization depends on the attitudes of the employees. Motivated staff will put in the extra effort needed to get a job done. There are various attitudes that can result in a harmonious work environment such as optimism, hope, resilience and commitment amongst others. These should be incorporated into a company's culture in order to achieve optimum performance.

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