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Implication Of Attitudes Applicable In The University And Organizational Performance And Outcomes

Samson Barongo

Department Of Psychology, Kisii University, Kisii, Kenya

C. M Nyenze

Human Resource Management, Kisii University, Kisii, Kenya

Zachary Kebati

University Lecturer And Senior Student Counsellor, Kisii University, Kenya

Abstract:

It is worth to note that attitudes are central tenets that drive an individual employee to be unstable psychologically, well being, and job security hence poor organizational performance. Less negative attitudes leads to enhanced, better organizational performance because support staff, middle support staff and senior support staff are socialized and communicated with the right attitudes. By managing attitude, a leader directs attention or awareness, guides the judgment, and triggers the desired behavioural responses. Further, proofs show that effect, one of the components of attitude, has become a major variable factor in decision-making. Positive affect has a significant effect on decision-making, problem-solving, and behaviour. "Affect directs attention, guides decision-making, stimulates learning, and triggers the behaviour.

Emotions are the strongest factors in decision-making because they have the capacity to arouse feelings to a point of awareness to take action. "We form beliefs, make judgments based on those beliefs, and take action on our judgments.

We have argued that attitudes have functions they play, the effects of attitudes on performance. The articles also discuss the positive and negative attitudes. However, the beauty of the discussion is the analysis of how workplace employees should develop and nurture an attitude regardless of its nature (there are true and untrue attitudes). The authors have also elaborated on the need for proper communication and how it triggers right attitudes. And lastly, the article gives a sample WPA (work place attitude barometer) which those with responsibility in the workplace and particularly at the university can utilize to measure attitude psychologically and scientifically.

1.Introduction

An attitude is the manner, disposition, feeling, position, etc. with regard to a person or thing; tendency or orientation, especially of the mind: a negative attitude; group attitudes. An employee like any other social being has got the inclination to develop attitudes.

1.1.Illustrations

There are several elaborations of illustrations of attitudes but essentially, what you think, what you do, and what you feel is what forms your attitude. For example, if a girl says, "I like dancing", it represents positive thinking towards dancing. This attitude is formed because she believes that she likes dancing, or feels happy while dancing. Consider another example, when someone says, "I hate working on this project" represents a negative attitude of that person towards the project. He either thinks so, or he believes that this work is boring. In both the cases there could be numerous reasons for developing those attitudes. In the first case, the girl may think that dancing is good for health or it is 'cool' to dance, or she must be having fun while dancing, in short the reasons could be numerous for her to like dancing or believe that she likes dancing. In the similar manner, in the second case, a man may hate working on a project due to numerous reasons that make him feel so or make him believe and think so.

1.2.Distinctive Attitudes Of Workplaces And Their Effects On Performance Outcomes

This study's empirical investigation of the relationships among workplaces, employee attitudes, and performance outcomes bridges two different streams of empirical research. First, a large literature has emerged that analyzes the impact of human resource and other management practices on productivity outcomes.⁴ A number of studies from this stream of research find that innovative HRM practices, and particularly sets of complementary practices, lead to large increases in plant- and establishment-level productivity

outcomes, even within a single industry. In the large commercial bank that we study, a common set of human resource policies is employed for all of its branches. Thus, we are investigating whether there are other workplace-specific differences related to the attitudes of employees that can help explain performance outcomes – even among workplaces that share a common set of work practices.

1.3. Functions Of Attitudes

1.3.1. Adjustment Function

The adjustment function directs people toward pleasurable or rewarding objects and away from unpleasant, undesirable ones. It serves the utilitarian concept of maximizing reward and minimizing punishment. Thus, the attitudes of consumers depend to a large degree on their perceptions of what is needed satisfying and what is punishing. Because consumers perceive products, services and stores as providing need satisfying or unsatisfying experiences we should expect their attitudes toward these object to vary in relation to the experiences that have occurred.

1.3.2. Ego Defensive Function

Attitudes formed to protect the ego or self image from threats help fulfill the ego defensive function. Actually many outward expressions of such attitudes reflect the opposite of what the person perceives him to be. For example a consumer who has made a poor purchase decision or a poor investment may staunchly defend the decision as being correct at the time or as being the result of poor advice from another person. Such ego defensive attitude helps us to protect our self image and often we are unaware of them Masiter (2001).

1.3.3. Value Expression Function

Whereas ego defensive attitudes are formed to protect a person's self image, value expressive attitudes enable the expression of the person's centrally held values. Therefore consumers adopt certain attitudes in an effort to translate their values into something more tangible and easily expressed. Thus, a conservative person might develop an unfavorable attitude toward bright clothing and instead be attracted toward dark, pin striped suits.

Marketers should develop an understanding of what values consumers wish to express about themselves and they should design products and promotional campaigns to allow these self expressions. Not all products lend themselves to this form of market segmentation however. Those with the greatest potential for value expressive segmentation are ones with high social visibility. Cross pens, Saks Fifth Avenue clothes, Ferrari automobiles and Bang & Children stereo systems are examples.

1.3.4. Knowledge Function

Humans have a need for a structured and orderly world, and therefore they seek consistency stability definition and understanding. Out of this need develops attitudes toward acquiring knowledge. In addition, the need to know tends to be specific. Therefore an individual who does not play golf, nor wish to learn the sport is unlikely to seek knowledge or an understanding of the game. This will influence the amount of information search devoted to this topic. Thus, out of our need to know come attitudes about what we believe we need or do not need to understand.

In addition attitudes enable consumers to simplify the complexity of the real world. That is, as was pointed out in the chapter information processing, the real world is too complex for us to cope with so we develop mechanisms to simplify situations. We saw that this involves sensory thresholds and selective attention and it also involves attitudes. Attitudes allow us to categorize or group objects as a way of knowing about them Masiter (2001). Thus, when a new object is experienced we attempt to categorize it into a group which we know something about. In this way the object can share the reactions we have for other objects in the same category. This is efficient because we do not have to spend much effort reacting to each new object as a completely unique situation. Consequently we often find consumers reacting in similar ways to ads for going out of business sales limited time offers American made goods etc. Of course there is some risk of error in not looking at the unique aspects or new information about objects but for better or worse, our attitudes have influenced how we feel and react to new examples of these situations.

1.4. How Do Negative & Positive Attitudes Affect The Workplace?

Workplace attitudes have an effect on every person in the organization, from the employees to the company owner. Attitudes help to develop the prevailing workplace environment that determines employee morale, productivity and team-building abilities. Understanding how positive and negative attitudes affect the workplace is an important tool in creating a harmonious workplace.

1.4.1. Validation

The prevailing workplace attitude adds validation to events that occur within the workplace. For example, if there is a prevailing negative attitude, then the announcement of a drop in revenue is met with expectation rather than creating a sense of urgency. The same announcement in a workplace with a positive attitude would be met with the sense that something in the business process is not working properly and must be rectified. The prevailing sense of optimism in the face of bad news helps validate the strong feeling of teamwork the company has developed.

1.4.2.Competition

Attitudes do not necessarily create competition in the workplace, but they enhance the competitive environment. A negative attitude in the workplace creates an atmosphere of distrust among employees and causes employees to attempt to achieve success at the expense of each other. In a workplace with a positive attitude, competition is seen as a motivator that inspires employees to perform at their best to improve productivity.

1.4.3.Creativity

Staff creativity is important for a small business in developing new ideas and coming up with creative solutions to company issues. A positive workplace attitude encourages creativity because employees feel that their ideas will contribute to the success of the organization. A negative attitude restricts creativity as employees do not feel obliged to contribute to company growth.

1.4.4.Retention

One of the more direct effects of attitude in the workplace is employee retention. A positive workplace encourages employees to become involved in company success. Employees invite career development so that they may be part of future company projects. A negative attitude leads to turnover and a loss of experienced staff members, which degrades the company's ability to grow.

1.5.Significance Of Attitudes

Attitudes serve as one way to organize our relationship with our world. They make our interactions more predictable affording us a degree of control. For example, the attitude "I like working for this company" is very useful in guiding our behaviour towards the company's work. Attitudes also enable us to reduce the vast amount of information that we possess into manageable units. All the beliefs we have about our company could be summarized as "I like my company", and thus our attitude represents the combination of many bits of information. We can use others attitudes to make judgments about them. It has been found consistently that the more similar our attitudes are to those of others, the more we like them. Finally, people's attitudes can sometimes be useful in predicting behaviour, such as how they will vote in an election or which brand of car they will buy.

1.6.Components

Attitudes consist of three basic components: a). Emotional c) informational and d) behavioural. The emotional component involves the person's feelings, or affect- positive, neutral, or negative- about an object. Thus, emotion is given the greatest attention in the organizational behaviour literature in relation to job-satisfaction. In addition, the expression of emotions positive, like a customer service representative; negative, like a bill collector or a police officer; or neutral, like an academic administrator or public servant- is also important to work behaviour. The informational component consists of the beliefs and information the individual has about the object. A supervisor may believe that two weeks of training is necessary before a worker can operate a particular piece of equipment. In reality, the average worker may be able to operate the machine after only four days of training. Yet the information the supervisor is using (that two weeks is necessary) is the key to his attitude about training. The behavioural component consists of a person's tendency to behave in a particular way toward an object. For example the supervisor in the above paragraph may assign two weeks of machine training to all his new people.

1.7.Maintaining A Positive Attitude In The Workplace

Be appreciative

Recharge yourself

Avoid or minimize negative work attitudes

By following the specific strategies below, you'll learn how to communicate with coworkers effectively, and lend to a positive attitude in the workplace.

1.7.1.Be Appreciative

It is always nicer to get a pat on the back rather than to get stabbed in the back. If you're wondering "how do I change my negative attitude," start by observing how you communicate with coworkers. If you practice asking useful questions, giving accolades and being gracious at work for two weeks, you'll notice a difference in the people you work with and in your own feelings about work.

1.7.2.Stay Positive Checkup Questions

How often do you show honest appreciation at work?

Are there opportunities to energize your coworkers?

What is the key to increasing a positive attitude in the workplace?

1.8.How To Communicate With Coworkers Effectively

Give thanks

Thank coworkers for the work they do that makes your job easier - including the peers, managers and office assistants. Even thank the security guard for making you feel safe at work. Cultivate a thankful, positive attitude in the workplace, and in return you'll notice a change in how coworkers treat you.

Acknowledge a job well done.

Celebrate

Managers should take informal time to celebrate birthdays, holidays, life changes and achievements and arranging congruent social activities like games.

Recharge Yourself

A favourite quote of ours is "A dead battery can't charge a dead battery." Stop complaining about negative work attitudes and lend your own energy to creating a more positive attitude in the workplace.

Stay Positive Checkup Questions

How can one person increase the positive attitude in the workplace?

What specific things can someone do to tap into the energy of others?

How can you maintain a more energetic and positive attitude in the workplace?

Bringing more energy to work can seem draining. But everyone we've talked to who tries it finds that they get more energy in return.

1.9. How To Communicate With Coworkers Effectively

Be enthusiastic

Enthusiasm is infectious. If you're going to spend eight hours a day at work, why not make it more than just tolerable. Make an effort to smile, laugh, and enjoy your job. If you work to create a more positive attitude in the workplace, others will follow.

Practice random acts of kindness

Each day try to do something kind and helpful. Offer to cover for a coworker so they can attend their kid's soccer game, bring a busy colleague a cup of coffee, or volunteer for a project. You don't have to create elaborate situations, just keep your eyes out for opportunities to do a good deed.

Look for opportunities to have fun

We all know someone who can make anything fun--and make time fly. Be that person. It's amazing how a joke here and a silly celebration there can breathe life into a stale office. Before you know it, other people will start coming to work with more bounce in their step.

2. Developing A Barometer For Workplace Attitude (WPA)

2.1. How Can Attitude In The Workplace Be Measured To Impact Positive Change?

The role of attitude and its importance in decision-making are becoming more apparent to the business leader/practitioner. He/she knows that the right attitude can provide tremendous financial gains, along with the catalyst for the development of a learning organization, and will result in the thinking, feelings, and actions of a positive business environment. However, the perceived power of measuring workplace attitude has not as yet been realized because it needs to be packaged in a measurable format that is acceptable to business practitioners.

The purpose of this section is to introduce an approach that measures workplace attitude without relying on the practitioner's intuition or perception. In the case study presented, workplace attitude is measured using an index created by taking the experiences of workers (using a Likert scale) and dividing them by the expectations of the respective experiences.

Attitude has become a defining factor in the workplace because it may be at the root of most business decisions. In a study conducted at the beginning of this century, David Maister provided evidence that workplace attitudes affect a company's financial success but beyond financial gains, they provide the catalyst for the development of Senge's learning organization and the formulation of Hofstede's mental connections that affect the thinking, feelings, and actions in a business environment Senge (2001).

The complex process of attitude formation has been studied over the past century; "from its relatively simple beginning as a state of preparedness or a set to make a particular overt response, the concept has grown into its present-day formulation as a complex, multidimensional concept consisting of affective, cognitive, and conative components." However, today's business practitioner does not have the time, knowledge, or budget to determine the attitudes of the workers before undertaking a task or implementing change. They must be decisive and able to make decisions based on partial information, making use of available shortcuts in measuring his or her environment and/or situation. Historically, great leaders have had the intuitive ability to gauge their group's attitude, although questions still remain.

2.2. Resolving Attitudes In The Workplace

Can we create a tool that requires minimal time, investment, and expense that measures workplace attitude?

Can the intuitive nature of attitude be measured?

What leads to these attitudes?

How can we use tools for measuring attitudes to foster change?

Can less intuitive leaders use a tool to be as effective as those with innate intuition?

Although the focus of this article is on the first question, the article will also touch upon the rest of these questions. A study was conducted with 125 business students who had an average of 10.5 years of work experience in their industry and were pursuing their business degrees at the Graziadio School of Business and Management at Pepperdine University. Three business processes were measured using a proposed theoretical workplace attitude (WPA) index formula whereby: $WPA \text{ index} = f(\text{experiences/expectations})$.

The three business processes were systems, operations, and people. A series of statements were presented to the business students in each of these business processes for their respective workplace environments. The respondents chose among seven alternatives from “Strongly Disagree” to “Strongly Agree.”

Using this approach, the data sets resulted in an overall WPA index of 0.85, which may be interpreted as 85 percent of this sample population’s expectations in their workplace were met with matching experiences Senge (2001)

In order to accomplish this, leaders must have an attitude barometer that signals the readiness of the workers to undertake a new task or accept a change in the organization. Some leaders have the ability to do this intuitively, while others require assistance in order to assess the group’s readiness.

With or without assistance, it is clear that expectations need to be aligned with experiences, and this is the basis for developing a workplace attitude index (WPA Index).

The development of the WPA Index requires us to explore three critical areas:

What is Attitude?

What is Workplace Attitude (WPA)?

How to Develop a Workplace Attitude Index?

Ultimately, the research indicates that when expectations are matched by experiences, the results lead to positive attitude formation and the creation of values in the organization. When expectations are not matched by experiences, the results may lead to negative attitudes that will adversely affect the work environment.

2.3. Managers Need Their Own Barometer

Below is a model with the assistance of a professional using a series of questions and statements that will measure the important attitude drivers or processes in your business or organization using a ratio between their respective experiences and expectations.

Statement	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Slightly Disagree	3 Disagree	4 Neutral	5 Slightly Agree	6 Agree	7 Strongly Agree
1. Appropriate information to do my job.			✓				
2. Accurate information to do my job.				✓			
3. Consistent information related to my job.					✓		
4. Timely information to complete my job.				✓			
5. Access to information to do my job.				✓			

Table 1: Examples Of Five Statements That Capture The Expectations Within Systems Are:

Then one can create a WPA index ratio using the Likert values (total or average values from the experience component as the numerator of the ratio and the total or average values from the expectations component as the denominator of the ratio).

N/B: Same values are used in another table but they are used as experience, then they bare divided in the equation below:

$$\frac{\text{Experience} = 20}{\text{Expectations} = 32} = 0.625 \text{ WPA Index Ratio}$$

The table represents one possible way to interpret the WPA index. If a project based on important management criteria is being considered, the WPA index may be used to guide management's actions. The manager would take the WPA index for a group of workers (unit, department, subsidiary, or company) and determine the readiness of the workers in undertaking a new task or accepting a change.

The task may not be just a project; it may be a major organizational structural change. It would be rare that the WPA index would exceed a value of 1 in a group situation. However, it may be possible. If the WPA Index exceeds "1," the group will still be deemed to be ready for the task or change.

Further, it means that the experiences have exceeded the expectations, and therefore, the group has a positive disposition towards the workplace environment composed of systems, operation, and people. One could say that the expectations were too low and management may need to reframe the expectations by setting higher goals or objectives. The index's scaling will have to be refined after further study and field testing.

3. Conclusion

Attitudes are formed over the years by various means. Sometimes, they are based on our experiences and knowledge and sometimes we acquire them from other people. Sometimes they are based on what is true or what we think is true. Humans manifest their attitudes through their behavior and actions. For example, in the first case, the girl may take up dancing classes and in the second case a man may leave the project. Basically, there are three components of attitude namely, emotional, cognitive, and behavioral that relate to feelings, information or thought process, and the course of action, respectively. All these things result in different people having different attitudes that may or may not change mellers (2004).

It is possible for human beings to change or unlearn their attitudes as attitudes are learned. One needs to change the way he or she thinks, behaves, and feels in order to change the attitude. However, it is very challenging to change our emotions and feelings but they constitute a major part of our attitude and hence changing attitude is a difficult task. Though vague, feelings are powerful and difficult to control and hence, to change your attitude you must start with other two components, thinking and behavior, as they are easy to control. By changing these components, it is possible to change different types of attitudes carried by different people.

Attitude is a little thing that makes a big difference". When there is much negative attitude, it may imply as observed above that: (a). There is more attitudes based on untrue experiences b). There is more attitudes based on true experiences c) these attitude experiences whether positive or negative are learned from other people. However, the corrective action is that though vague, feelings are powerful and difficult to control and hence, to change your attitude you must start with other two components, thinking and behavior, as they are easy to control Attitude is a little thing that makes a big difference in the working environment especially at the university setting" Heise (1999).

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