Human resource management

UNIT 2: Organizational behaviorism

TOPICS DISCUSSED

- Group behaviorism: a classic workplace vs remote working
- Human needs: a classic workplace vs remote working
- Job satisfaction: a classic workplace vs remote working

Introduction

Between 1924 in 1933, the company Western Electric in Hawthorne, near Chicago, was the site of a series of studies which involved 300 volunteers and aimed to determine the impact of physical work environment (lighting) on productivity. The research also included a group of scientists from Harvard Business School. The group conducted as many as 21,000 interviews with the workers. It eventually showed that the group of 300 volunteers, which was part of the study of the effect of lighting, was more effective than the rest of the 21,000 factor workers, regardless of the lighting conditions in their workplace.

The psychologist George Elton Mayo (1880-1949) was key in interpreting the result. Mayo (1933) claimed that the volunteers' increased productivity was the result of the effect of the group on the individual, and also other working conditions, specifically group relations.

Over the next decades, these findings inspired a series of studies and theories on motivation and motivating, informal organizations, working hours, etc.

The main question was: HOW TO IMPROVE PRODUCTIVITY.

Organizational behaviorism – key theories

- The first satisfaction report was published by Richard Stephen Uhrbrock in 1934.
- In 1943, **Abraham H. Maslow** (1908 - 1970) published his theory of motivation, known as the " hierarchy of needs".
- Between 1959 and 1964, **Frederick Irving Herzberg** (1923-2000) published a series of articles on motivation; in 1968, he complemented this with his well-known two-factor theory of motivation.
- Between 1950 and 1960, **Chris Argyris** (1923-2013) researched the effects exerted on individuals by organizations.
- In 1968, **Renato Tagiuri** (1919-2011) originated the notion of an "organizational climate".
- The first index of job satisfaction was published in 1951 by **Arthur Brayfield and Harold Rothe.**
- **Charles Redding** (1914-1994) is considered the founder of studying organizational communication. In 1972 he originated the the idea of "communication climate".

Key findings - Elton Mayo

Key findings, as determined by **Elton Mayo**, included the following:

- Even in individuals with high potential, productivity is, to a large extent, affected by social factors.
- Group norms (e.g. working hours) affect productivity.
- Productivity is also affected by informal organization.
- Every organization also possesses and informal component.
- Productivity is affected by levels of control.

Key findings – Abraham Maslow

8-stage model of human needs:

1.Biological and physiological needs - air, food, drink, shelter, warmth, sex, sleep, etc.
2.Safety needs - protection from elements, security, order, law, stability, freedom from fear.
3.Love and belongingness needs - friendship, intimacy, trust, and acceptance, receiving and giving affection and love. Affiliating, being part of a group (family, friends, work).
4.Esteem needs, which Maslow classified into two categories: (i) esteem for oneself (dignity, achievement, mastery, independence); and (ii) the need to be accepted and valued by others (e.g., status, prestige).
5.Cognitive needs - knowledge and understanding, curiosity, exploration, need for meaning and predictability.
6.Aesthetic needs - appreciation and search for beauty, balance, form, etc.
7.Self-actualization needs - realising personal potential, self-fulfilment, seeking personal growth and peak experiences. A desire "to become everything one is capable of becoming."
8.Transcendence needs - a person is motivated by values which transcend beyond the personal self (e.g. mystical experiences and certain experiences in nature, aesthetic experiences, sexual experiences, service to others, the pursuit of science, religious faith, etc.).

The paradigm of organizational behaviour - critics

- Izawa, French and Hedge (2011) conducted a precise statistical analysis of the existing study documentation. The statistical analysis of the three lighting experiments conducted at Hawthorne Works show erroneous correlations between lighting and productivity.
- In all, existing study documentation and modern analyses strongly indicate that the study came to erroneous conclusions.
- Theories of needs as well as theories of satisfaction stem from the paradigm of organizational behaviour. They originated in the context of factories and factory workers, with the intention of increasing productivity. Over the course of time, however, work circumstances have undergone significant changes.

The paradigm of organizational behaviour and remote working

Despite the criticism and its many weaknesses, organizational behaviour persisted as the leading HRM paradigm throughout most of the 20th century.

In relation to remote work, the paradigm as a whole needs to be considered with certain caveats:

- nowadays, the results of the study are generally considered problematic;
- the paradigm of organizational behaviour is based on a study of volunteer factory workers; remote work, however, is not factory work;
- organizational behaviour is interested in how to increase productivity–it does not look at issues significant to remote work, such as quality, innovation, and intercultural co-operation;
- the key finding of the Hawthorne studies was that individuals are affected by groups; remote work, however, takes place in groups which are different in nature from the ones formed during factory work.

The paradigm of organizational behaviour – relevant questions

Organizational behaviour opened up questions still relevant today in connection to remote work, among them the issues of:

- human needs;
- job satisfaction or dissatisfaction;
- organizational climate;
- organizational culture.

References

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