

# Management and organisational behaviour nursing essay

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I serve in the role of Area Manager for a non-profit organisation that employs specialised support staff in schools. In 2012, I restructured the district allocation of District Coordinators in my Area and adjusted the staff who directly report to me. This restructure meant that I was now responsible for supervising Mallory, the wife of Jeremy, one of my District Coordinators. In the previous organisational structure Mallory reported to her husband Jeremy. When I took over this staff member's supervision, I immediately began to receive reports from stakeholders within the community that her performance was not satisfactory. This took me by surprise as all the feedback that I had received up until that point, admittedly through the filter of Jeremy, had indicated that Mallory's performance had been acceptable. In order to corroborate the feedback that I was receiving from the school communities that Mallory worked in, I asked Jeremy for copies of the original probationary review and annual reviews that he should have completed. These reports were not forthcoming. I met regularly with Mallory to coach, support and encourage her. However, as the complaints and frustrations from the school communities increased and with growing concerns for Mallory's suitability for her role, I commenced a Review of the program that Mallory was responsible for. The review indicated that the school community was dissatisfied with Mallory's performance and revealed a concerning breakdown in her working relationships with school staff across the board. In addition there were fundamental areas of her role that the review indicated were unsatisfactory. These included work ethic, punctuality and timely, effective communication. Mallory was given three months to focus on the areas that the review indicated needed the most improvement and I

increased my coaching and support, assisting her develop goals and plans and working closely with the school-based committee, to whom Mallory also reported, to refine the role and assist Mallory and the school committee understand what was expected of her. After another unsatisfactory review I commenced a formal Performance Improvement Program (PIP) process with Mallory as from the commencement of Term 1, 2013. This situation presented the additional complexity of Mallory's husband Jeremy. Jeremy also reported to me as part of the leadership team for the Area, and we were part of a dynamic team and had a close and healthy working relationship. However the performance issues that I was addressing with his wife caused a great deal of relational friction. I met on a number of occasions with both Jeremy and Mallory to explain and work through the performance issues and reassure them both that I wanted Mallory to succeed and be successful in her role. Mallory did not respond to the PIP process very well and she became increasingly disengaged, defensive and disrespectful. It was revealed that she had experienced similar processes when she had worked in other organisations, and she perceived that the process was unfair. As part of Mallory's PIP process I met with her weekly to coach and feedback on how she was progressing at fulfilling the requirements of her role and fulfilling the objectives of the PIP. These meetings served to help rebuild our working relationship and re-establish trust that Mallory and Jeremy perceived had been broken. This process helped Mallory reassess her suitability for her role and gave her the success and encouragement from a number of accomplishments to pursue employment in a related sector.

## **Task 2. 1: Impact on Attitudes and Perceptions**

Wood et al. (2013, p. 58) defines attitude as the propensity for an individual to respond positively or negatively to someone or something in the environment. Attitudes are functionally related to beliefs and values (Hastorf & Knutson 1949, p. 91) and predispose individuals to certain behaviour (Wood et al. 2013, p. 59). Hastorf & Knutson (1949) define perceptions as "an active purposive process developed through past experience" that has a major unconscious aspect. It is clear that Mallory's negative perceptions towards me as her supervisor were due, to a large degree, to her past negative experiences of supervisors in other workplaces and what she perceived as unfair dismissal from her previous employment. Mallory had a propensity to respond negatively to people in authority thereby making her situation worse because she would not communicate. During meetings with the school-based committee tasked with supporting Mallory and the program she facilitated, Mallory would perceive attempts by individuals to support her and assist her in her role as personal attacks and would withdraw communication. Mallory demonstrated cognitive dissonance (Festinger 1957; Krause 1972) whereby she would explain how she enjoyed and gained personal satisfaction from working in her role, yet she would not fulfil the obligations and requirements of the role. Cognitive dissonance was also evident in Mallory's perception that she was relational and approachable, yet her reviews and feedback from school staff demonstrated that her behaviour was perceived as 'rude and disrupting of other's work to fulfil her own needs.' Mallory and Jeremy responded to the PIP process quite negatively and initially were not convinced that the PIP that was undertaken to support and

improve Mallory's performance in her role. In addition Mallory's negative response to the assistance that was delivered to her negatively influenced Jeremy's working relationship with me also. The other impact of attitudes and perception that are important to address are those of the school principal, school community and the school-based management committee. These stakeholders' attitudes and perceptions of the organisation were formed through my response to the complaints, feedback and concerns that they raised. If I failed to act and permitted underperformance then these stakeholders could potentially have withdrawn their support and the future of the program could have been in placed in jeopardy.

## **Task 2. 2: Two Motivational Theories and impact of events on motivation**

Latham and Pinder (2005) conclude that the three motivational theories of greatest importance are goal-setting, social cognitive, and organisational justice theories. This task will therefore use goal-setting theory and organisational justice theory to critically discuss the motivations of Mallory and Jeremy.

### **Goal-setting Theory**

Locke and Latham's goal-setting theory states that " task performance is regulated directly by the conscious goals that individuals are trying for on the task" (Locke & Latham 1990, p. 240). Hundreds of experimental studies have demonstrated that specific, challenging goals have a greater impact on positive performance than specific, easy goals, general encouragement, or no specific goals (Locke & Latham 2002). Due to poor goal setting and

planning from Mallory and a lack of accountability for this from her previous supervisor Jeremy, Mallory's understanding of the requirements of her role was incomplete. This lack of focus and specific, challenging goals negatively impacted on her motivation to successfully fulfil the duties of her role.

Mallory displayed a distinct lack of vision and purpose and was often emotional, stressed and worried. Lord, Klimoski & Kanfer (2002) established that moods and emotions have an impact upon whether goals are accomplished and Mallory's often depressed state would no doubt have impacted her job satisfaction and motivation. Individuals gain great personal satisfaction and a positive sense of well-being through setting and accomplishing goals (Emmons 1986; McClelland 1987) therefore the previous lack of forward planning and goal setting would also have a negative impact on Mallory's motivation.

## **Organisational Justice Theory**

Organisational Justice refers to individual's perceptions of fairness in organisations (Greenberg 1990) and is a key contributor to motivation (Latham & Pinder 2005). Mallory demonstrated a 'work to rule' mentality and had a well developed personal understanding of what she believed was just and fair. In my supervision and coaching sessions with Mallory she would often comment that the process that she was going through and the requirements and expectations of her were unfair. It was her perception that what was expected of her was more than what was expected from other employees. Greenberg (1990) explains that an employee's perception of the fairness of their treatment from their leaders, in regard to outcomes and

processes, serves an important psychological need and that employees who feel that they have been unfairly treated respond affectively with low commitment and behaviourally by disconnecting. This perception of injustice could have been demotivating for Mallory. Ball, Trevino and Sims (1994, p. 302) posit that when punishment is perceived as just that undesired behaviour is more likely to change to desired behaviour because the employee is more willing to comply. Although initially Mallory stated that she believed that the PIP process I instituted with her was harsh and unjust, as I continued to work with her and help her understand the expectations of her role and the school community, her attitude dramatically changed and she came to view the process as just and fair and understood the personal development and training foundation of the process. Titrek's study of Turkish schools demonstrates that socio-cultural variables affect the perception of organisational justice among school employees (Titrek 2010, p. 189). Hoy and Tarter (2004) assert that trust is the foundation of organisational justice and demonstrate that where employees view their managers as trustworthy that the level of perceived organisational justice increases. As I continued meeting with Mallory each week at our one on ones, I deliberately focused on building our relationship and establishing trust. I recognise that the increased relational connection that we forged was a motivating factor for Mallory to achieve the goals of the PIP.

### **Task 2. 3: Group Dynamics**

Teamwork efficiency is a crucial component for improving productivity and performance. (Telleria, Little & MacBryde 2002). The major impact upon

group dynamics and teamwork efficiency in this scenario was Jeremy's reaction to his wife Mallory's performance issues. Jeremy recognised that he had empowered her underperformance by not addressing the issues appropriately when he was her supervisor. He also recognised that this reflected negatively upon his own performance. However, following process regarding underperformance and addressing the complaints that were made about Mallory by the school community caused tension and friction in our relationship. This relationship conflict or affective conflict is associated with lower team productivity and morale (De Dreu & Weingart 2003; Flanagan & Runde 2009). Relationship conflict became evident in our leadership team meetings with other district coordinators and created tension and disharmony amongst group members. Hooper and Martin's (2007) concept of leader-member exchange suggests that perceptions of unfairness may affect team commitment, job satisfaction and wellbeing. Jeremy's perception that his wife Mallory was being treated unfairly certainly reflects this as his commitment to the team and job performance began to be negatively affected also. Teams are an important part of our organisational structure and employees meet regularly in teams to work on projects and for peer support. An additional influence upon group dynamics was Mallory's response to the PIP process and her negative attitude and criticism of her committee chair that pervaded her communication with other staff members. This negativity influenced other team members and created a perception of distrust in leadership amongst a small number of the team. However, Mallory's negative behaviour to a large degree ostracised her from the group causing a black sheep effect (Pinto et al. 2010). This black sheep



effect further increased Mallory's perception of injustice and unfair treatment. Jeremy's perception that Mallory had been treated unfairly caused him to be critical of my leadership and speak negatively about other organisational decisions to other members of the team. This interpersonal conflict and tension in the group challenged the existing team cohesion. This low cohesiveness did not affect the productivity of the group too significantly however. The re-emergence of the storming stage of Tuckman's group development model (in MGT5000 Management and Organisational Behaviour: Study Book 2013) refocused the group on the importance of the team and the mission and vision for which we were striving. Jeremy and I shared a close friendship that had been established through working together over many years. This strong 'mateship' enabled the team to continue productively whilst Jeremy wrestled with the process and performance issues regarding his wife Mallory.

### **Task 3: Recommendations**

In light of the previous discussion, this section of the essay will propose recommendations regarding actions that could be taken to manage:

Attitudes and perceptions, Motivation of staff, and Group dynamics

### **Managing Attitudes and Perceptions**

#### **Recommendations**

#### **Rationale**

Peer Mentoring Program Positive mentoring relationships have a verifiable impact upon job attitudes (Bozeman & Feeney 2007; Ragins 2000).

Employee Attitude Survey Employees in organisations that survey their staff

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are more engaged with the goals of the organisation (Wiley 2012). An employee's attitude has a greater impact on performance than all other factors combined (Crim & Seijts 2006), therefore assessing employees attitudes and engagement will establish a platform from which to improve. One-on-One Coaching Institute regular one-on-one meetings with all staff to coach, build relationship, and give positive and negative feedback. When conducted regularly one-on-ones can unlock untapped potential and significantly improve employee attitude (Haan 2008). Frequent Training and Development Regularly updated training has been demonstrated to have a positive impact upon employee attitude (Truitt 2011). Ensuring that staff training is current will not only positively contribute to attitudes and perceptions but also productivity.

## **Managing Motivation**

### **Recommendations**

#### **Rationale**

Goal setting and Strategic Planning Establishing goals, particularly difficult goals, has significant scientific validity in enhancing effort, performance and motivation. (Locke & Latham 2002; Seijts 2009). Providing tools and templates to assist staff formulate goals and plan for the future, and supporting the outworking of these goals by ensuring accountability will positively contribute to employee motivation. Work-Goal Motivation Training Program Salmela-Aro, Mutanen & Vuori (2012) demonstrated that targeted training programs which enhanced preparedness and understanding of an employee's role increased intrinsic work-goal motivation. Implementing a

Training Program that further prepares an employee for their role and empowers them to achieve specified goals will increase employee motivation. Rewards and Incentives Investigate intrinsic rewards such as special projects, travel opportunities and TOIL days that can enhance lifestyle and increase motivation. (Finkelstein & Mead 2012)

## **Improving Group Dynamics/Functioning**

### **Recommendations**

#### **Rationale**

Recognition and Praise Awards Establish a simple awards ceremony as part of occasional staff meetings to recognise the success of teams and individuals (Cacciope 2001 in MGT5000 Management and Organisational Behaviour: Study Book 2013). Supplement these recognition awards with ‘Thank You’ and encouraging notes praising the work of employees who have performed well. Refresher and Advanced Training In order to reinvigorate experienced teams and overcome groupthink, provide refresher training and advanced training and encourage employees to share the philosophy of the life-long learner (MGT5000 Management and Organisational Behaviour: Study Book 2013). Cluster Team Meetings and Projects Regular time spent together helps build team cohesiveness (Certo & Certo 2012) and assigning small projects to teams will give strategic opportunities for communication and cooperation. Assigning staff to larger more difficult projects will achieve the aim of building team cohesion but also enhance motivation (Locke & Latham 2002). Periodic Peer Feedback Teach teams to use the situation-behaviour-impact (SBI) approach to give constructive feedback to each other. (Runde &

Flanagan 2008) Team Retreat Formal retreats are an effective method of team-building (MGT5000 Management and Organisational Behaviour: Study Book 2013). Facilitating a retreat once a year will provide a good opportunity to assist staff to reengage with the mission and vision of the organisation.

Survey of team performance Measuring and assessing team performance is a demonstrated method of improving management and leadership of teams (Telleria, Little & MacBryde 2002). Gathering data regarding team performance will assist in the development and implementation of strategies and training programs to increase team performance, and inform the recognition and reward of high performing teams and individuals.