

Individual differences and work behavior

Business



It is very important to have a clear understanding about the human and work behavior of individuals in an organization. This is because the existence and success of an organization depends on its employees. It is, therefore, important to understand the human and work behavior of different individuals within the organization. All work places are people with diverse attitudes, personality, values, motives, perception, abilities and motives. The main reason why managers and employees should strive to study the work and human behaviors within the organization is that no individual is like another. In the early days, organizations treated individuals as if they had the same human and work behaviors.

Over the recent years, organizations have been keen to incorporate the human behavior differences in the scope of their operation. How an individuals' human and work behavior can reflect or affect his/her performance in an organization is taken in to consideration. Work behavior of an individual is crucial as it determines the productivity and effectiveness of a certain employee. For example, some individuals within an organization are motivated to perform while others are not (Greenberg & Barom, 2002). A person's behavior can be described as an observable response or responses from him/her.

The responses may be directly or indirectly observable. It is possible to make a direct observation of an individual's response by studying his/her character at work and his/her responses to different situations. On the other hand, the indirect responses can be categorized as the attitudes of an individual, as well as his/her decision-making processes. This can also be done by evaluating people's description of particular employees. Since the success of

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an organization depends on the human and work behavior of the employees, it is vital to take note of the individual differences in order to factor them in their work environment. Managers will also use the individuals human and work behavior while allocating duties, promoting individuals and while hiring and firing employees (Mukhopadhyay, 2010).

Literature Review According to John Ivancevich et al. (2005), behavior is the outcome of an individual's characteristics and their interaction with a specific environment. Every person has his/her exceptional combination of such characteristics. An individual's characteristics are acquired in various ways. Some are acquired at birth, some from an individual's environment; and others are acquired through education and certain experiences in life. Most characteristics that are acquired through birth are not very significant in determining the work behavior of an individual.

The characteristics that are learned are vital in shaping the work behavior of an individual. People acquire such characteristics when they grow up and interact with various environments surrounding them. The environmental factors are responsible for broadening the human characteristics that affect an individual's human and work behavior. The various environmental factors that affect the human behavior include the economic factors, social factors, cultural factors, political factors, and social factors. Personal factors, which include personal and physical attributes, also play a big role in determining a person's behavior (Greenberg & Baron, 2002).

An individual's personal factors include age, sex, education, race and abilities. Psychological factors are among the indirectly observable

responses. They are part of an individual's mental attributes and characteristics. They include attitudes, personality, values and aptitudes. These factors affect the human and work behavior through psychological processes. The physical environmental factors that affect human or work behavior of an individual are comprised of all features of the physical world that one can see, feel, smell or touch (Nkongho, 2010).

Some social environmental factors that affect the work behavior of an employee include the worker's family, colleagues, subordinates, unions, supervisors and managers. This is because a human being is a social being that is capable of being influenced by the various people he/she interacts with. The importance of recognizing the individual's differences, according to Nkongho (2010), is to enable the organization to take care of the employee as a "whole person". This makes the employee be effective as a person, as well as a worker. The study also shows that the fulfillment of the employee's needs makes him/her positively motivated and hence, able to make an effective performance. The management is, therefore, able to show the employees how various actions could lead to their fulfillment and vice versa.

By recognizing the individual differences and attending to them, the authors say that it results to an increased human dignity among the employees. This helps them to find value in themselves and hence, get motivated.

Understanding an Individual's Human and Work Behavior Human beings were regarded as being lazy, self-serving, neutral, self-motivated and positive according to the early classical approaches. This meant that human beings were to be controlled and pushed to perform. The management

needed to keep them under surveillance at work in order to ensure effective performance.

The management ensured that they were under the total control in all the sectors within the organization (Mukhopadhyay, 2010). On the other hand, systems and contingency philosophers saw people as adaptable. They felt that human behaviors were mostly adopted through learning and not attributed to positive or negative predispositions during early life. The philosophers who included Likert and Bennis viewed human beings and employees with a more positive human nature. According to these philosophers, human beings strived to improve their social and personal well-being.

They think that such employees would strive to achieve success in the work place even without being pushed if they felt appreciated. They argued that some employees could even work hard just to see that the job is well done. They outlined that employees' performance was reliant on the leadership of the organization and autonomous decision-making. They also argued that for employees to be creative, their jobs had to be challenging (Gupta, 2010).

Human Behavior Model To explain how different individuals behave differently, various philosophers in their urge to explain the human behaviors have put across two models. The two includes the Psychoanalytic model and the Existential model.

The Psychoanalytic model is based upon the conflicting human model. The theory used free association and psychotherapy techniques of an individual for its analysis. The Freudian approach indicated that the human behavior is

not consciously explained at all times, and unconsciousness was the main drive of individual's behavior. According to the theory, the human behavior was dependent on three major factors. They included the id, ego, and super ego. The Id component of behavior meant the urge for an individual to have pleasure.

At a young age, most individuals are not able to control their Id, but with age, most individuals are able to control their pleasure. Id is an important component of behavior and thinking throughout a person's life. The ego of a person always conflicts with the person's Id. It is more conscious, and its manifestation is widely dependent on the super ego (Mills, 2003). The super ego represents the conscience part of human behavior, and a person is, therefore, unaware of its existence and functioning. The super ego is dependent on the society's cultural values and moral factors.

This development of the super ego is influenced by a person's background and upbringing. The parents are the main influencers of the super ego as children pick moral principles and values mostly from their parents. All the three determinants are always in a tussle during the life of an individual (Mills, 2003). The existential theory is based on philosophy and literature. This theory suggests that human beings adapt their behaviors from the environment. The theory states that individuals, therefore, determine their own destinies.

According to this theory, people have no time to dwell with the cultural background. This theory is more prevalent with today's employees, which indicates that both the internal and external environment of an individual

play an important role in deciding a person's behavior (Nkongho, 2010).

Implications of individual differences on work behavior The human behavior affects how different individuals function at work. A manager cannot perform effectively without having an understanding of how different his people are. Individuals respond differently to situation depending on their human behavior.

Individual's personality has a greater influence to individual performance and relation with others. The organizational design of a work place is also affected by the human behavior of individuals (Gupta, 2010). Discussion of Literature Each individual has specific unique characteristics that determine his/her behaviors. Various aspects of life determine the characteristics of individuals. Some characteristics are acquired through birth while others are acquired during an individual's life. Those characteristics acquired during birth do not have much impact on an individual's performance and relationships at work.

These characteristics are discussed in the Freudian theory of Psychoanalytic. The character traits discussed by Freud include the Id, Ego and the Super Ego of an individual. In the work place, these factors have an influence in each person's behavior. The traits also vary from one person to the other since each person adopts them depending on where they were brought up, and their parents influence them (Greenberg & Baron, 2002). The acquired characteristics account for the biggest variance in individual behaviors.

These are characters that individual adopts from his/her environment. In the current world, it forms the basis for individual differences as people do not

necessarily accommodate the inherited character traits. The environment is, therefore, cited as being responsible for the acquired traits. This includes traits acquired through experiences, education, political factors and economic factors. The existential theory of understanding human behavior explains these factors.

The theory as discussed earlier is based on philosophy and literature. It explains why the environment has played a big role in shaping individuals and how human beings relate with the environment. Conclusion Every person is endowed with a unique set of traits. The differences in individuals' behaviors are either acquired or hereditary. Due to these differences, individuals have varying values, personality, attitude and perception of ideas. These factors affect how they perform in an organization.

It is, therefore, important for managers and supervisors to be able to recognize these individual differences. This helps them understand their work force and allocate tasks to individuals. It also helps the management be able to fulfill the requirements of their employees. A manager should also be aware of the various theories used to evaluate individual behavior in order for them to be able to analyze their employees. Ultimately, the organizational management involves managing the diverse workforce to achieve common organizational goals. The success of a particular manager depends on his ability to use the various positive personality differences in achieving success for the organization while at the same time, managing to suppress negative individual differences that may give rise to failures in the achieving organizational goals.