

Marxist analyses and motivation theories management essay



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Motivation defined as: The set of processes that arouse, direct, and maintain human behaviour towards attaining some goal. Motivation is the inner drive that pushes individuals to act or perform. Employees' motivation in a company or a firm is a very crucial management practice which should not be underestimated since its implications are very much pronounced.

Motivated employees have greater concentration and are less likely to make mistakes, cause accidents or be involved in conflict. They are also likely to show greater loyalty to the company and have less absenteeism.

Some authors argue that there is no problem of worker motivation in capitalist economics, as managers can rely on job insecurity to ensure compliance. Other have identified the characteristics of capitalism is that production of commodity occupies a dominant position and production of surplus value. The conflict of interests between owners and employees will be caused the problem of worker motivation in capitalist organizations (Knights and Willmott, 2007). Because of the owners interest is not making work more satisfying for employees but exploit them.

The purpose of this essay was to explore is there a problem of worker motivation in capitalist economies. The following presents the literature reviews about motivation theories and Marxist analysis of the nature of capitalist economies. Secondly, the case of Wal-Mart that used illustrates the problem of worker motivation in capitalism. And also some critical arguments will be presented. Finally, make a conclusion that is based on the justified argument.

Literature review: Marxist Analyses and Motivation Theories

2. 1 Marxist Analyses

Capitalism is a mode of production based on private ownership of the means of production (Heilbroner, 2008). Capitalists produce commodities for the exchange market and to stay competitive must extract as much labor from the workers as possible at the lowest possible cost. The economic interest of the capitalist is to pay the worker as little as possible, in fact just enough to keep him alive and productive (Isaac, 2008).

In capitalism, the worker, who is alienated from the products he creates, is also estranged from the process of production, which he regards only as a means of survival. Estranged from the production process, the worker is therefore also estranged from his or her own humanity, since the transformation of nature into useful objects is one of the fundamental facets of the human condition (Pinder, 2008). The worker is thus alienated from his or her “species being”-from what it is to be human. Finally, the capitalist mode of production alienates human beings from other human beings (Harder, 2008). Deprived of the satisfaction that comes with owning the product of one’s labor, the worker regards the capitalist as external and hostile (Carter, 1995).

2. 2 Motivation Theories

In this increasing competitive world where satisfaction of workers needs is the centre of attention for both private and public organizations. Not all people are motivated by the same thing and over time their motivations might changes (Hutchens, 1989). Therefore, Motivation theory can help us to <https://assignbuster.com/marxist-analyses-and-motivation-theories-management-essay/>

consider the different investments which can be made in people. A motivated and qualified workforce is crucial to increase productivity and the quality of the organizational services in order to achieve organizational objectives (Isaac, 2008).

The most popular needs classification is the one developed by Abraham Maslow's. Maslow Hierarchy of Needs put forward a theory that there are five levels of human needs which employees need to have fulfilled at work. At the most basic level, an employee is motivated to work in order to satisfy basic physiological needs for survival, such as air, water, food, sex and sleep. Following the achievement of physiological needs, ones attention shifts to safety and security needs in order to overcome the threat of physical and emotional difficulties. The next three levels in Maslow's theory relate to intellectual and psycho-emotional needs: love and belonging, esteem and finally the highest order need, self-actualization. He believes at this point individuals have the desire to achieve their full potential and skills (Anonymous, 2009). All of the needs are structured into a hierarchy and only once a lower level of need has been fully met, would a worker be motivated by the opportunity of having the next need up in the hierarchy satisfied (Pinder, 2008). For example a person who is dying of hunger will be motivated to achieve a basic wage in order to buy food before worrying about having a secure job contract or the respect of others (Locke & Letham, 2004).

Herzberg (1966) proposed a two factor (motivation-hygiene) motivation theory. The satisfier/motivators include achievement, recognition; work itself, responsibility, advancement and growth, while the hygiene factors <https://assignbuster.com/marxist-analyses-and-motivation-theories-management-essay/>

include company policy and administration, relationship with supervisor, working conditions, personal life, salary, and relationship with subordinates, status, and security. Motivators are the factors that fulfill individual's needs for meaning and personal growth; hygiene factors create dissatisfaction when they are mishandled.

Worker motivation problem in Wal-Mart

In 2001, Wal-Mart became the world's biggest company in terms of sales revenues and 2.1 million employees (Fortune, 2002). However, in order to minimize operating costs and maintain low prices, Wal-Mart pays relatively low wages, provides minimal benefits to its employees, and also "Wal-Mart's Punitive Policies Drive Employees to Work Sick." A deli section worker said: "Everyone comes to work sick," including employees handling food. In the deli section, "most of girls come coughing their brains out, but can't go home because of points coughing too loudly switch you to another department. Since you can't take days off." Her cough worsened, and she ended up hospitalized with pneumonia (Institute for Global Labour and Human Rights, 2009). Being sick, deli section work was hard because it's a "hot area," requiring in and out visits to a freezer to get meat. "Everyone is sweating and your hair is all wet, but we can't use fans because of the dust (Greenhouse, 2002)." Another Wal-Mart worker told: "Wal-Mart's (sick) policy has not changed, and no one said anything about this. As a result, one worker said morale is low in their workplace and "pretty much everyone hates their jobs," but haven't much choice in today's economic climate (Institute for Global Labour and Human Rights, 2009).

Under Wal-Mart's "Open Availability" policy, management demands everyone be available 24 – 7. "A flood of people would leave the company if they could find other work. Fear and need keep them there." In order to provide low-cost products to customers, they cut staff salaries; reduce full-time employees' health insurance fee and also no health insurance fee pay for temporary workers. Overall, Wal-Mart treats employees punitively. They're overworked, underpaid, and treated like wage slaves (Kaufman, 2000).

Capitalist organization, like Wal-Mart think that they had managed quite well without to motivate staff, as they still rely on the fact that people need a job. Marx argues that labor is central to a human being's self-conception and sense of well-being. Labor are as much an act of personal creation and a projection of one's identity as it is a means of survival (Harder, 2008). However, Wal-Mart deprives employees of this essential source of self-worth and identity. The employee's approaches work only as a means of survival and derive none of the other personal satisfactions of work because the products of his labor do not belong to him (Carter, 1995). "Everyone comes to work sick," all of the staff do not have the right to rest when they are sick. Unless you found a new job then you can rest. If you are coughing too loudly that they will switch you to another department. Everyone hate their job but fear and need keep them continue to work. This entire situation is due to these individual rights are expropriated by capitalist company. In addition, the power of the profit motive encourages unscrupulous individuals to act unethically (Burawoy, 1979). Poor treatment of staff and lack of consideration for motivate.

According to Maslow's model of work motivation based on a hierarchy of needs in which individuals are posited to first seek the satisfaction of physiological needs before pursuing other desires (Ford, 1992). Employee is motivated first and foremost to satisfy physiological needs. Organizations must provide employees with a salary that enable them to afford adequate living conditions. Employees will feel less motivated to do some tasks if they feel their compensation is not appropriate. Paying employees less will lead to dissatisfaction. A dissatisfied employee is an unmotivated employee (Hutchens, 1989). However, wages at capitalist Wal-Mart have always been "as little as we could get by with at the time" The current wage does not honor Wal-Mart workers' personal development and it stifles their participation as individuals in society (USA TODAY, 2012). According to Living Wage Calculator, the per-hour salary necessary to meet the minimal life necessities in Charlotte, North Carolina is approximately \$8.73 per hour (Washington monthly, 2006). The current wage of many Wal-Mart employees falls well below this benchmark. From a more macroeconomic vantage point, economists estimate that the aggregate annual income of a full-time Wal-Mart employee is approximately \$17,600 a year. Moreover, the annual income of an individual compensated by a living wage comes in at \$18,152.40, well above Wal-Mart's average figure. Even more disturbing, using very conservative estimates as approximations, a newly hired Wal-Mart employee can expect to earn approximately \$14,560 annually. Not only does this figure fall far below the recommended living wage value, but it also only marginally clears the abject poverty standard for an individual of \$11,201 (Anthony, 2006). In Wal-Mart, Employee's money need does not satisfy. The company pay minimum wages but in getting in more out of them. Their

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minimum wages only enable workers to survival, let alone to meet other needs. These salary figures have direct bearing on a Wal-Mart employees' ability to purchase health care. Some authors said that it happens because the capitalists monopolize one thing: surplus value of labour belongs to them (Braverman, 1974).

Another researcher said that capitalism has its drawbacks. Profit is a motivator who lacks morals. It is focused only on a single outcome of business actions ignoring all other outcomes (Cater, 1995). Company pays lower wages to gain higher profits. Wal-Mart cannot meet staff needs it will led them lack of motivation, that they tend to resort to anti-work behaviours such as absenteeism, late-coming, failure to meet deadlines, display of open frustration and all these factors work negative to the performance and credibility of an organization. As a result, with most the recent staff cynicism and resign, shoppers are waiting longer for service and getting upset (Institute for Global Labour and Human Rights, 2009).

It can be observed that Herzberg (1990) ranked hygiene and motivator factors as the most important motivational theory when uncertainty exists, problems can arise. If an employee is concerned that her job is not secure, she/he may be unmotivated to produce a full effort. Without safety, an employee can be unmotivated. If the motivational factors are met, the employee becomes motivated and work performs higher (Ford, 1992). In Wal-Mart, the working environment is bad that deli section workers working in a " hot area," where everyone is sweating, but they can't use fans because of the dust. For above situation, Wal-Mart does not do anything and

do not make any changes to meet employees needs. As well as, " Open Availability" policy also let staff feel that they become Wal-Wart Androids.

For reducing the costs, Wal-Mart cut employees health insurance fee, and no insurance fee paid for part-time workers. Capitalist organizations think that they had quite well without theories of motivation; managers can rely on the fact that people need a job as a powerful force for motivation (Knights and Willmott, 2007). Their interests is not making work more satisfying for employees but in getting in more out of them. As a result of lack of employees' motivation, most of employees began to hate their jobs, give a negative emotional attachment to their jobs, and being dissatisfied with its role in the work environment. Further, a recent study shown that; employee motivation is directly proportional to organizational performance and profitability (Fortune, 2002). With all these negative and unappealing characteristics of being a Wal-Mart employee, why do people inevitably find themselves working at this dreadful modern day sweatshop passed off as a nationwide superstore? Wal-Mart has left their employees in a dilemma that produces the mindset that no other stores will provide a job opportunity in this difficult economy but in return employees receive extremely poor treatment and considerably low wages (Nlcnet, 2001).

Conclusion

The problem of worker motivation is inevitable under capitalism because the workers are an exploited class. The lower their wages are, the higher the owners' profits. The owners take the products, services and infrastructure created by the workers, sell them on the market, and pay the workers as little as possible.

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The Maslow need theories maintain that an individual is motivated to do something if he or she experiences a specific need that may be fulfilled directly or indirectly by performing that action. The lower order needs have to be satisfied in order to pursue higher level motivators along the lines of self fulfillment. In addition, Herzberg said that in order to motivate people an organization needs to first have the baseline that is the hygiene factors in place and then the motivators will be used to motivate and in absence of the base line motivation is not possible to achieve. It is indicative of the above discussion that most of the employees need to motivate. However, in the case of Wal-Mart, they paying staff lower wages, cut their self-control, and also the sick policy regulates everyone comes to work when they sick. Under those circumstances, most of the employees began to hate their jobs, and being dissatisfied with its role in the work environment. All of this is due to company wants to profit maximization.

In sum, the long-term survival of any organisation depends largely on the motivation of its employees be it financial or non-financial. Therefore organisations should be willing to continuously and on regular basis, undertake employees surveys such as this one in order to understand what their employees expects from their current job. The result of such exercises could prove useful for the organisation, because knowing what their employees wants and efforts in meeting these needs facilitate a mutual working environment for both the employees and its management. Using the power to motivate workers will cause worker motivation problem.