Team and Group Dynamics in Organizations: Effect on Productivity and Performance

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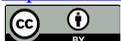Email: funmititi@hotmail.com, Funmilayo.oyefusi@actionaid.org

Abstract

This paper looked at the team and group dynamics in organization and the effect of these dynamics on the productivity and performance of employees within an organization. The paper examined how the different factors influence the behaviour of employees within ActionAid Nigeria, the values of the organization and how it shapes the behaviour of employees, the external factors that can influence the individual behaviour in a group, the role of leadership in shaping organizational behaviour and how the various dynamics influence productivity and performance of employees and the organization. The paper seeks to understand the factors influencing employee behaviour and how that can affect productivity and performance of employees. The paper also established that employee well-being can affect productivity and performance if the values of the organization are not adequately communicated especially to the new members of the organization with diverse temperaments, culture, status, and religious beliefs. The work also revealed that leadership behaviour and personality can shape organizational behaviour which could influence performance positively or negatively in the organization.

Keywords

Teamwork, Organizational Behaviour, Motivation, Leadership, Diversity, Productivity, Performance

1. Introduction

The objective of this research is to authenticate the previous research on team and group dynamics in organizations and establishments; and to boost the connection between team dynamics and productivity, its influence on innovation of employees in an organization. The social exchange theory in examining the Employee-Organization relationships was interrogated to establish the role of or-

ganizations in influencing the behaviour of employees through leadership, mentorship, and reward systems. The research also interrogated the effect of the pandemic on the behaviour of employees before, during and after the lockdown.

Teamwork has been defined as a *cooperative process* that allows employees to achieve exceptional outcomes through knowledge sharing, skills sharing and synergy between teams enhances a collaborative work environment where every employee is willing to contribute and participate in decision making and solving problems to achieve organizational goals (Tarricone & Luca, 2002: p. 4). Organizations are referred to as collective creation of people which involves human relations. It also includes the communal effort of many employees working towards a common goal; however, the success and productivity of those employees will depend on the efficiency of integrating the members of the organization. Researchers have established theories that the interaction of team members is crucial to the performance of the team, and the more effective the team's interaction is, the better the performance and the outcome of their interaction (Wang, 2018: p. 2). Organizations require a structure that will integrate the members and ensure there are clear guidelines for decision making which would also be targeted at the relationships between different groups in the organization, providing the tenets for diversity, incorporation and standards of *decision making.*

Research has it that at the initial stage of transition in organizations, the thinking of one employee is capable of influencing the other employees' behaviour in a group or team and there was discrimination between the different generations of employees (Vadi & Vedina, 2007: pp. 94-95). Leadership has also been known to influence the team behaviour and *team innovation* and based on the *interactionist perspective of innovation*, leadership capabilities such as the confidence in taking decision can motivate the team to generate resourceful ideas.

The capability of leadership to go beyond complying to organizational policies, practices and procedures goes a long way in enacting a set of behavioural patterns that can enhance team creativity and performance as stated in the interactionist perspective. Though the team members may not have enough motivation to engage in creative activities, however the leadership capacity can influence the team members productivity negatively or positively. Following the interactionist perspective, it has been observed that the context in which the leader operates influences the *teamwork quality*, *team creativity* and the implementation of the team idea (Peralta et al., 2021: pp. 678-691).

Diversity in an organization has become essential and it comprises *demographic variables*, *job related attributes*, *attitudes*, *personality traits*, *values* of individuals that makes up a team. Theoretical discussion in recent times gave two categories of diversity in organisations: non-psychological attributes and psychological attributes. The non-psychological attributes include *age, gender, race, physical abilities* while the psychological attributes are referred to as the *cognitive ability of the employees, values, beliefs, and attitudes*. These attributes and

their different categories have been incorporated into business models to understand the correlation between the team performance and diversity, though previous research has focused on the non-psychological attributes of diversity; however, organisations are now focusing on psychological attributes of diversity as these have great impact on team creativity and performance (Woehr et al., 2013: pp. 107-108).

Diversity within the organization has also shown from research that it supports team's resilience, flexibility, and productivity. The employees' experiences from different culture and background can also support the team in overcoming challenges arising from team dynamics, however employers must proactively select team members that will bring in diverse experiences, skills and strengths to enhance individual and organizational performance and productivity (Holm, 2013: p. 807).

The diversity of the team members is equally represented by the diverse importance attached to value categories and the values of the organization by each team member, the greater the variance of importance attached to each value category the more diverse the team will be. Team effectiveness is also based on the diversity of the team, and this should include setting the criteria for evaluating the outcome of the team's tasks and responsibility as well as criteria for evaluating the team's interaction. It has been observed in organizations that relationship conflict has a negative impact on team productivity and performance, however though the impact of task conflict is not very clear, observation of teams in different organization reveals that task conflict can be resolved based on the goal of the assignment and clarity around criteria for work tasks. A comprehensive analysis of the task can lead to creativity of the employee and strategic planning, however, in some cases if there are no clarity around task roles and expectations it can hinder the achievement of the task goal and ultimately the implementation (Woehr et al., 2013: p. 111).

2. Literature Review

The literature summarizes the theoretical frameworks used in examining the behaviour of teams and groups and its influence on productivity and performance. Three frameworks were examined, the social exchange theory which explains the relationships of employees based on the policies and guidelines within the organization: the self-categorization theory describes how individuals define themselves as members of a social group and they are able to defend themselves against external influences by defining their values. The third framework is the theory of planned behaviour which indicates that individuals will behave according to the perceived consequences of such behaviour within an organization.

The social exchange theory clarifies the relationships that develop among employees over a period of time due to the *exchange* of relations with regulations and standards that guide the interaction of employees in an organization. *Exchange relations* refer to the expectations between employees based on trust and

the level of benefits involved which could be informal in nature. Teamwork and leadership according to research should be based on *self-knowledge*, empathy and *courageous conversations* which means having an open hand when relating with colleagues and building trust, confidence and believe in everyone as each employee has a gift and strength to contribute to the success of the team (Heeter, 2015: p. 8). Employees will react positively to a positive work environment in their attitudes and actions; however, they will also respond to a negative treatment in a negative way in their actions and behaviours. Although, linked to the social exchange theory is the displaced aggression theory which posits that employee may not show aggression towards their managers who might be the source of their aggression for fear of being reprimanded or because of the culture of the organization, however they may show the aggression towards their fellow workers who are not able to apply sanctions (Mackey et al., 2018: pp. 661-662).

These displayed aggression towards fellow employees can impact on employee behaviour which can affect productivity and performance while also impacting on the external stakeholders of the organization negatively (Mackey et al., 2018: pp. 660-661). Productivity is said to be about each employee being able to bring their full creativity, insight, and uniqueness to work so as to improve efficiency and contribute to organizational goals. Productivity is also defined as the relation of output to the volume of resources committed to producing the output (Tangen, 2005: p. 35). However, the productivity of employees can be affected by the mental state of health of such employees which can impact on the behaviour leading to displayed aggression towards other colleagues.

Social exchange theory also seeks to understand the influence of employee-organization relationships (EOR); organizations that engage in high-inducement EORs are seen to develop a long-term oriented relationship with their employees and these influences the motivation of employees to perform beyond their job functions and engage in positive behaviours in alignment with organizational values (Wang et al., 2019: p. 474).

The self-categorization theory examines how individual employee categorize themselves and their colleagues and how this categorization influences the group behaviour. In this theory, individual define themselves as members of a particular social group and this definition enhances the comparisons between all the group members. Individual employees that have defined each other as members of a *social group* are able to shield themselves from the influence of the external groups. The members of the social group determine the values of their group and ensure their behaviours are consistent with those values. Models in self-categorization theory are not based on the interpersonal interaction, however they are formed by communal awareness of the group's view of the required behaviour (Friedkin & Johnsen, 2011: pp. 6-7).

This categorization is in contrast to some other studies where theorist have argued that categorization occurs when a *social target is presented, when we are*

attending to others and perceiving them as social targets. Rather than categorize people, researchers encourage us to process individuals based on precise particulars of each employee which is referred to as individuation; this enables us to deviate from shared categorization of members of a team to processing the distinct attributes of each employee (Hugenberg & Sacco, 2008: pp.1053-1054).

The *theory of planned behaviour* postulates that the comportment, standards, and *control* can influence individual employee behaviour in organizations and those factors are as a result of the beliefs that individuals hold which could be from *personal experience, education*, and the environment where the individual is exposed to. The evaluation of these beliefs within any given environment will determine how the individual will behave which can also lead to a cost-benefit analysis of the behaviour. If the individual perceives that there might be repercussions on a certain behaviour, then the extent of engaging in that attitude will be considered before the demonstration of the behaviour (Burns et al., 2018: p. 1093).

3. Methodology

The chosen methodology for this research was based on the epistemological approach of social constructionism, which is linked to a form of rationalism, where knowledge is construed as being constructed within a specified context and clearly connected to the individual (Linden & McKenney, 2020: p. 704). The epistemological approach is termed interpretive as it describes the feelings and thinking of people in relationships (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012: pp. 22-24), and the relationship between learning and knowledge among professionals, their communities and organizations require deliberate advancement of knowledge for effective performance and productivity (Paavola & Hakkarainen, 2005: p. 535). The social constructionism suggests that teams learn from each other by interaction and their learning is also influenced by the work environment (Wright et al., 2016: p. 1275).

The ethnography methodology was adopted in this research to enable the understanding of the influence of individual behaviour on team dynamics in ActionAid Nigeria. Ethnography is a recognised instrument for increasing understanding of the patterns of learning both within formal and informal learning environment. The principles and the beliefs of employees as well as their understanding of the work environment culminates into a culture that influences the dynamics of the team. Studies have also shown that the exploration of the *intersection* of different cultures and knowledge systems enables us to have a better understanding of the process of learning that influences team dynamics within organisations (Sherman et al., 2021: pp. 279-280).

The qualitative data collection method was used with focus on observation that a collection of different individuals, diverse personality, and styles when effectively managed can result in a high performing team and lead to achievement of group and organisational goals (Thomas, 2018: p. 10). Qualitative method provides narrative data and seems to be a flexible way of data collection, analysis,

and interpretation.

4. Results and Analysis

A grounded theory was used in analyzing the data as it offers an all-inclusive approach to the analysis and the observations made during the data collection was contextualized. Grounded theory research can be *iterative and recursive* as it brings out the themes and patterns as observed in the findings (Chun Tie et al., 2019: p. 3).

To examine the values of the organization that influences the behaviour of teams/groups, the study identified three possible factors from the literature. They are:
- The values and the culture
- The leadership
- Staff benefits and motivation from the organization; and

4.1. Values and Culture

As detailed in Table 1 below, all the respondents affirmed that values and the culture of the organization influences team behavior. Those who strongly agreed accounted for 36.9%, while those who agreed accounted for 47.7% of the respondents. Those who somewhat agreed were 15.4%.

In summary, more respondents (100% of all responses) agreed that organizational values and culture matter the most in shaping or influencing the behavior of teams/groups in a work environment.

4.2. Leadership

Table 2 below detailed the responses of the participants on leadership. They agreed that leadership plays a significant role in determining the behaviour of teams. In total, 84.6% strongly agreed/agreed that leadership matters for work team's behaviour, while 15.4% were in the category that disagreed and neither agree nor disagree.

Table 3 below looks at the cross tabulation of how leadership encourages collaboration rather than competition among team members. 84.6% of the respondents strongly agreed/agree that leadership encourages collaboration among team members rather than competition; while 15.4% disagree and neither agree

Table 1. The values and the culture of the organization influence the team behaviour and support team cohesion

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	24	36.9	36.9	36.9
	Agree	31	47.7	47.7	84.6
	Somewhat Agree	10	15.4	15.4	100.0
	Total	65	100.0	100.0	

Table 2. The leadership encourages collaboration rather than competition among teams.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	Strongly Agree	26	40.0	40.0	40.0
	Agree	29	44.6	44.6	84.6
Valid	Disagree	3	4.6	4.6	89.2
	Neither agree nor disagree	7	10.8	10.8	100.0
	Total	65	100.0	100.0	

Table 3. How effectively does your team work together? *The leadership encourages collaboration rather than competition among teams. Crosstabulation.

		The leadership encourages collaboration rather than competition among teams.				Total
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	
How effectively does your team work together?	Extremely Effectively	10 (15.38%)	5 (7.69%)	0	0	15
	Very effectively	12 (18.46%)	14 (21.54%)	3 (4.62%)	4 (6.15%)	33
	Somewhat Effectively	4 (6.15%)	10 (15.38%)	0	3 (4.62%)	17
	Total	26 (39.99%)	29 (44.61%)	3 (4.62%)	7 (10.77%)	65

nor disagree with the fact that leadership encourages collaboration among teams.

In summary, the results show that most respondents agree that leadership plays a significant role in driving teamwork (as a measure of organizational behaviour).

4.3. Effect of Group Dynamics on Productivity and Performance

Group dynamics from the respondents is measured using gender, diversity, and Cognitive and adaptive problem-solving skills. These factors are measured as the independent variables while productivity and performance are the dependent variable. To examine this relationship, the regression is specified thus:

$$Y = \alpha + \beta_1 \text{Gender} + \beta_2 \text{Diversity} + \beta_3 \text{PSA} ;$$

where PSA is the Cognitive and adaptive problem-solving skills of the team; and Y is the dependent variable measures from the response on whether composition of the team within the organization enhances the productivity of the team.

The estimation from the SPSS software shows that the effect of gender and diversity on performance are not statistically significant while problem solving ability had a significant relationship as detailed in Table 4 below.

The significance of team member's cognitive and adaptive problem-solving skills in the equation shows that it is the most effective driver of performance of work teams in organizations.

$$Y = 1.55 - 0.064 \text{Gender} - 0.037 \text{Diversity} + 0.181 \text{PSA} ;$$

Table 4. Regression result on the determinants of performance.

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	1.552	0.285		5.439	0.000
Gender of Respondent	−0.064	0.134	−0.060	−0.476	0.636
1 Diversity of team members is taken into consideration when composing the various team.	−0.037	0.070	−0.066	−0.525	0.602
Team member's cognitive and adaptive problem-solving skills are taken into consideration in team composition.	0.181	0.084	0.266	2.148	0.036

a. Dependent Variable: The composition of the team within the organization enhances the productivity of the team.

5. Discussion of Result

According to the Integrated Model of Work Motivation, an individual's values and personality contribute to the choice of goal, which is influenced by incentives and self-efficacy. The theory assumes that an individual will be highly motivated when he or she believes that their behaviour will attract a desired reward or outcome. Likewise, the individual will not be motivated to work if he or she does not believe that his or her behaviour will amount to the desired outcomes or rewards.

Overall, it can be argued that this theory of high-performance work systems incorporates both motivating and de-motivating factors and provides managers with a template as to how to deal with this together. While it does not specifically talk about how the job itself is to be designed, it does seem that workers in such a system would be given increased challenge and responsibility, as well as opportunities for advancing in the organization, personal growth and organizational recognition, all things that Herzberg argued are needed to motivate workers and make them perform at a high level.

5.1. Leadership

This paper found that leadership, staff benefits and motivation, and the Cognitive and adaptive problem-solving skills of the teams, are effective determinants of work team performance. A productive and successful team requires a careful composition of the team, members of the team should be diverse with multiple skills such as cognitive and adaptive problem-solving skills.

Competent leadership is said to have three attributes of character, presence and intellectual capacity, the intellectual capacity of the leaders will enhance

their ability in composing a team that will be productive and contribute effectively to the performance of the organization. Competent leaders are also seen as transformational leaders with high moral reasoning, with the ability to motivate employees to place group goals above their individual goals to enhance organizational performance (McDonald, 2013: pp. 3-4). Leadership must also ensure there is shared decision-making and team members must be supported to take responsibility for their roles in the team (Tarricone & Luca, 2002: p. 4). The test for statistical significance shows that while gender and diversity of work teams also matters for organizational performance, what is crucial is the cognitive ability of team members to solve problems in work groups.

Management is urged to practice situational leadership to enhance team and group performance; apply sanctions for violation of values and culture while also rewarding good behaviour. Situational leadership is designed to support employers to lead depending on the situation (Richardson, 2018: p. 15). This means that leadership can both be directive and supportive depending on the exposure of leadership to situation and also the leaders' evaluation of the competency and commitment of the employees in delivery of tasks.

Leadership can vary their leadership style of being directive or supportive in addressing the changing needs of their employees based on the fact that employee's morale and skill can be unpredictable (Northouse, 2013: pp. 99-100). Situational leadership model can support leadership to become effective by focusing on the goal while also choosing a suitable style that can motivate the employee to improve their self-confidence and performance which ultimately reflects in organizational performance (Raza & Sikandar, 2018: pp. 73, 79). The organization's investment in employee's capacity development as championed by leadership is commendable and contributes to effective performance; however, they believed that having an internal learning process in form of scheduled online trainings will contribute greatly to staff capacity development and improved performance.

5.2. Formalized Coaching and Mentoring

It is believed that formalizing coaching and mentoring will further enhance and support employee performance. Mentoring is said to support employee's growth *personally and professionally* by utilizing the expertise and understanding gained from their mentors. Mentors are known to be sounding board of employees, they provide *encouragement*, shows compassion, and share experiences with their subordinates to gain understanding of work roles and responsibilities.

The effectiveness of mentorship will be when there are clear roles and responsibilities of both parties and there is a level of trust in the relationship (NZIM Mentoring Expands, 2012: p. 50). Coaching is said to be a learning and development process to improve performance at individual, group, and organizational level, it is also a short-term mediation aimed to improve employee performance or to support in developing a specific competence or unlock the em-

ployee's potential (Hawkins, & Smith, 2013: p. 28).

5.3. Internal Learning Platform

The commencement of the internal learning platform was also encouraged where staff including the new joiners can improve on their capacity that will enable them deliver on their role. It has been known that self-regulated learning can predict employee *satisfaction and achievement* which impacts ultimately on performance (Im & Kang, 2019: p. 114). Part of this internal learning is also to provide succession plan that will give opportunities to colleagues to lead different teams and learn from their managers, this will also include effective delegation, feedbacks and enhance team building which can lead to effective performance.

5.4. Staff Benefits and Motivation

A recommendation on improving the non-financial benefits such as provision of Creche for nursing mothers be sustained as this provides a mental stability for female employees and influences their productivity. The organization is also encouraged to invest in the Mental Health of employees as the environmental conditions in which the organization operates might affect the mental health of employees thereby affecting team dynamics and relationships causing decreased productivity and ultimately affecting organizational performance. Health plans that include having recreational facilities and regular health talks and checks will also contribute to improving employee productivity. The organization was encouraged to consider a hybrid work environment for a mix of generations in the workplace to attract, retain and motivate talent for a dynamic and productive team.

6. Conclusion

The findings in this research indicated that organizational values and culture shapes and influences the behaviour of teams and groups. This paper also establishes the fact that leadership, staff benefits and motivation, and the Cognitive and adaptive problem-solving skills of the teams, are effective determinants of work team performance. A productive and successful team requires a careful composition of the team. The members of the team should be diverse with multiple skills such as cognitive and adaptive problem-solving skills. Leadership must also ensure there is shared decision-making and team members must be supported to take responsibility for their roles in the team (Tarricone & Luca, 2002: p. 4). While it was observed that gender and diversity of work teams matters for organizational performance, the cognitive ability of team members to solve problems in work groups is very crucial.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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