Employees Morale: A Review Appraisal

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Introduction

The word Morale is originated from the Latin word 'mores' which means the ethics, attitude or behavior. Every organisation is set up with certain goals. In order to achieve these goals, different people and activities are grouped together. Mere grouping of people and activities and assigning the duties and functions does not lead to attainment of goals set for them. It is a matter of common sense that people can perform their duties well only when they put their heart into their work and they will put their heart only when they are inspired by the organisation. Only then they can do the miracles; but if they have indifferent attitude towards their work, they will not be at their best irrespective of all the resources.

It is, therefore, absolutely essential that the group as a whole is charged with enthusiasm about the work entrusted to them. Such zeal or enthusiasm is usually referred to as morale.[1] According to Spriegel[2], "Morale means the cooperative attitude or mental health of a number of people who are related to each other on some basis". Another definition given by Brech[3] is, "Morale may be described as a readiness to cooperate warmly in the task and purposes of a given group or organisation". Blake[4] (1954) suggested that good morale is "an intangible quality that causes happiness and personal contentment throughout the company". For this meaning morale is the state of mind regarding one's job including job satisfaction, company loyalty and putting forth extra effort to achieve company goals. It is purely emotional. It is not static but dynamic in nature and changes depending upon working conditions, superior, fellow worker's attitude, pay and so.

The crux of all these definitions is that morale is the degree of enthusiasm and willingness with which the individual members of a group set out to perform the allotted tasks.

In conditions of high morale, every individual human being works with a will and identifies the objectives with those of the organisation. A condition of low morale is, on the other hand, characterized by an attitude of indifference or hostility towards the work in hand and lack of a cooperative spirit.

The importance of morale was first realized in the army operation during World War I. During World War I, the unending nature of the fighting took a heavy toll on military morale. A decline in French morale resulted in widespread mutinies in 1917, although it recovered somewhat during 1918. German military morale underwent a partial collapse in the autumn of 1918, while the British army's morale remained remarkably high; these two factors help to explain why the war should have ended in November. Generally speaking, a swift and decisive victory can only be achieved if one adversary is greatly inferior to its opponent in terms of 'fighting power', a term that encompasses such factors as training, tactics, weapons, and morale. French civilian and military morale was noticeably poor in 1940, as were other aspects of its army's fighting power. During the Vietnam War, effective American tactics, logistics, and the like were undermined by a collapse of morale among its troops, which was in turn related to the decline of support for the war on the US home front.

Methodology of the Study

The objective of this paper is to furnish a comprehensive review of the empirical studies conducted to show the effect of employees morale on organizational culture, organizational change, organizational performance, organizational policies, motivation, stress factors, productivity, diversity, employee retention, merger, workplace environment etc. The prime source of the studies reviewed herein includes various websites, selected referred international and national journals, PhD Research work.

Besides introduction, the present paper is divided into three sections. Section two discusses the methodology of the study, section three reviews the available literature on the topic and section four concludes the paper.

Review of Literature

Baehr and Renck (1958)[5] conducted a study to find out the relationship between organizational culture and employees morale. Data was collected by surveying 54,000 employees of different industries and occupations over a period of three years. It was found that 76 items influence the workers on the job. These 76 items were classified and grouped into 14 variables and 14 variables were categorized into 5 primary factors of morale. The researcher found that healthy organisational culture had significant and positive impact on employee's morale.

Kasal (1992)[6] conducted a study for her Doctor of Philosophy to find out the relationship between organizational culture and employees morale. Organizational culture was measured by using 11 dimensions and employees morale by 5. Data was collected from 6 companies selected from 3 fields categorized on the basis of technology used by them. The researcher concluded that organizational culture had significant and positive impact on employee's morale.

Ostroff (1992)[7] conducted a study to examine the relationship between employee's attitude and organizational performance. Data was collected from 364 schools. The researcher concluded that aggregated teacher attitudes such as job satisfaction and organizational commitment were related to school performance measured in the form of student academic achievement and teacher turnover rates. Results were strongest for teacher satisfaction, thus organizations with more satisfied employees tended to be more effective than organizations with dissatisfied employees.

Ward (1998)[8] submitted an applied research project identifying stress factor within the employees of Wrightsville Beach Fire Department, North Carolina and made recommendations to alleviate the impact of stress factors on employees morale. All the 78 employees of the department were taken for study and data was collected in questionnaire. The researcher concluded that the leadership problem, lack of trust, integrity, empowerment etc. reduced the employee's morale. He recommended effective communications, periodic evaluation of the balance between management and leadership, continuing leadership training, periodic mission statement review, sincerity, trust and full commitment in work and leadership etc. will alleviate the impact of stress factors on employees morale.

Neely (1999)[9] conducted a study on the relationship between employee's morale and productivity of Tulsa Fire Department, Oklahoma and what measures should be taken to improve employee's morale. Data was collected by two methods. Firstly, data of twelve months worth in the form of quarterly reports for District 4 "C" platoon and secondly, survey method was used. The researcher concluded that there was increase of productivity with the increase in morale and to improve employee's morale measures like positive reinforcement, employee input, feedback and empowerment should be adopted.

Mcknight et al. (2001)[10] conducted a study to find out the effect of employee – management relationship closeness to employee morale and moderate the effects of management control (autonomy, feedback and incentive control) on employees morale. Questionnaires were sent to 100 manufacturing plants in Japan (41), Italy (33) and United States (26) in the automotives, electronics and machinery industries and data was collected successfully from 66 plants. The researchers concluded that employee – management relationship closeness was a stronger morale booster for plant workers and management controls themselves did not improve employees morale but moderation of each by a close employee – management relationship improved employees morale.

Morgan (2002)[11] conducted a study to examine the impact of diversity on the morale of the employees working in San Diego Fire Department. Negative consequences brought on by not recognizing and responding to diversity issues included lower employee satisfaction, commitment and performance, high turnover rate, absenteeism and reduced work quality. The researcher concluded that fully using all employees will increase performance and productivity. Employee performance, morale and success ultimately depend on how we managed the changing demographics of our current and future work force.

Coleman (2003)[12] conducted a study to evaluate the level of employee morale and employee retention in the office of Circuit Clerk of St. Louis County Courts and why employees were leaving the job after or before joining the organization. For this purpose, four surveys on 200 permanent court employees were conducted and 133 responses were received and a review of resignation letters from employees was done. The researcher concluded that the reasons for low level of employees morale and low employees retention were no known date of pay increase of employees, court's administration and management attitude, poor communication, co-

worker's attitude, lack of training facilities for employees, poor air quality, lack of space availability etc.

Lowe et al. (2003)[13] conducted a study to perceive how far work environment was healthy and safe for employees, what are the relationships between workers perception of a healthy work environment and organizational and individual outcomes i.e. job satisfaction, employee commitment, perceived workplace morale, absenteeism etc. and how organizational working conditions correlate with sociodemographic, labour market status etc. Interview was done telephonically and data was collected from valid 2500 employed Canadian residents 18 years of age and above. The researchers concluded that majority of the employees perceived that there workplace was both healthy and safe. They found that females and workers who were younger (18-24) and older (55 and above) were likely to perceive their work environment as healthy compared with males or workers between the age of 25 and 54. They perceived strong positive relationship between six work environment factors and healthy workplace.

Lloyd (2003)[14] conducted a study to address the problem of low morale of employees in the Memphis Fire Department (MFD) resulting in low productivity and personal growth and how to improve it. Data was collected through interviews, surveys and questionnaires. A total of 5 interviews, 678 successful surveys and 17 questionnaires were taken for the study. The researcher concluded that low morale level of the employees could be lifted by making full use of all employees, recognizing them, work in team, encourage employees to grow and shown confidence, listening them, share experiences with them, empower them, provide sufficient training programs, be open and honest, make promotional system fair, make committees to solve morale problems etc.

Zweni (2004)[15] tried to adopt the strategy that could be used by Eastern Cape for effectively restructuring the organization without affecting the employees morale adversely. Information for this purpose was obtained through primary and secondary sources. Some of the latest restructuring strategies from dissertations, theses, research papers and journals were consulted. Questionnaire was used to check the impact of recent restructuring on the morale of employees. Data was collected from all 28 employees of the former business- banking. The researcher concluded that restructuring process did not adversely affect the morale of most of the respondents and still they were enjoying their work. Most of the respondents could not find out

whether restructuring process was good for them or not and it improved their working conditions or not.

Everett (2005)[16] conducted a study to identify the reasons for low levels of morale and motivation in the line officers and fire fighters caused by staff level officers that lead to low levels of productivity on the Sioux City Fire Department. Descriptive research methods were used including interviews with recognized leadership experts and questionnaires for line employees and staff members. Questionnaires were sent to 114 firefighters and questionnaires completed in all respect were collected from 40 employees. The researcher concluded that lack of Commitment, Enthusiasm and Respect, Long Term Orientation and Empowerment were factors responsible for low level of morale and motivation. These factors were management related factors proving that the staff officers had a great opportunity to improve performance by improving these areas.

Mani et al. (2005)[17] conducted an empirical study to find out the employees perception towards the service climate in Hotel industry in Tamilnadu in India. For the purpose, the researchers took 3, 4 and 5 star hotels in four major cities (Chennai, Coimbatore, Madurai and Tiruchiapalli). From each city 50 top hotels were taken. For the study in total of 250, 5 frontline employees (Front Office, House Keeping, Food, Beverage and Production) from each hotel were taken. The result of the study was that the employees use the right technologies to give the best according to the needs of the customers but in most of the cases, they were not delivering the service or product in time.

Day et al. (2006)[18] conducted a study to give attention to nursing workforce issues such as recruitment, retention, turnover, workplace health and safety issues and their impact on quality patient care. Poor performance of these factors led to low morale of nurses. To improve the morale, the researchers had given some suggestions in the form of good workplace relationships between nurses, adoption of professionalism in nursing, sense of being valued, delivering of quality nursing care, well staffed and better organized units to report risk factors, needle stick injuries and near misses, good organizational structures and culture, good leadership and communication, job security etc.

Kaur (2006)[19] conducted a study to find out the relationship between organizational culture and employees morale in selected commercial and co-operative banks. Banks were compared by using 11 dimensions of organizational culture and 5 dimensions of employee's

morale as used by Nandita Kasal and some demographic variables. The researcher concluded that there were significant differences on 7 dimensions of organizational culture in two types of banks. Open organizational culture was more prevalent in commercial banks as compared to co-operative banks. The employee's morale in commercial banks scored significantly higher than co-operative banks and finally a positive and high degree of correlation existed between organizational culture and employee's morale.

Vales (2006)[20] conducted a study to find out whether fun in the workplace was a factor that boosted employees moral resulting in high productivity, lowering employees turnover and absenteeism and making efficient team building and effective communication. The researcher studied whether fun in the work place boosted moral or not along with five other factors studied earlier. The researcher sent e-mail to approximate four thousand members in a variety of industries and businesses to collect the data. The researcher found that fun in the work place boosts the employees moral by lowering stress, absenteeism, turnover etc and leads to increase employ enthusiasm, employ happiness and increased employ creativity.

Billava (2007)[21] conducted a study to check firstly the various factors affecting the level of employees morale, secondly the level of morale and thirdly level of satisfaction of the employees of the company. For this purpose the author took a sample of 20 employees. He found that the factors like social security measures, welfare facilities, salary status, bonus, health condition, shift system and recognition of work affected the employee's morale. He found that majority of employees were happy to work in the organization and their level of morale is higher.

Wang (2008)[22] conducted a study to find out the relationship and roles in the construction of Chunghwa Telecom employees work values and staff morale, training mechanism, performance evaluation and welfare and safety mechanism on the strategic human resource management. A questionnaire consisting of 18 questions were sent to 2300 persons and 1395 returned. After removing the unusable questionnaires, there were 1080 usable questionnaires. The author found that in the overall work values, participate decision value, reward benefit value and training and skill value could be included in the structure of overall work morale. Apart from it, a strong relationship was found between overall work morale and work value and the structure of work morale and be included in the structure of strategic human resource.

Lalla (2009)[23] conducted a study to examine the impact of merger on the employees of Tshwane University of Technology and how to minimize the impact by successfully managing the merger process. Data was collected from 72 respondents by using questionnaire and was analyzed by using SPSS version 13.0. The researcher concluded that mergers definitely had an impact on the employee's personal and professional perspective. Further the researcher also concluded that mergers had negative impact on job security, promotional opportunity, management relationships, performance standards, communication, relationship with colleagues etc.

Riley (2009)[24] conducted a study in a non- profit agency (ACHIEVE) to check the problems of high employee turnover. The objectives of the study were to find out the causes that leads to maintain or terminate employment and what strategies were implemented by ACHIEVE to improve employee retention rates. Data for this study was collected from 287 employees. The researcher concluded that employee satisfaction and employee retention is a multifaceted problem and measured relationship, personal growth and system maintenance to curve the problem of high employee turnover.

Djati and Adiwijaya (2010)[25] conducted a study to find out the relationship between employee morale and organizational commitment towards Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB) and OCB towards service quality performances. Data was collected from 133 respondents taken from administrative staff of 5 private universities in Surabaya – Indonesia. The researchers concluded that there was positive and significant relationship between employee morale and organizational commitment towards OCB and OCB towards service quality performance of employees.

Spangenberg (2010)[26] conducted a study to know the level of morale at public and private sector banks and the differences in the perceptions of employees (managers and staff level) regarding the organizational culture and to find out the relation between organizational culture and employees morale. 120 questionnaires were distributed to employees of 3 public sector and 2 private sector banks and 91 usable questionnaires were collected. The researcher concluded that morale in employees of private sector banks is higher than public sector in all five indices of employee's morale and there were significant differences for all eight values of organizational culture in both types of banks. The findings also shown that organizational culture had positive impact on the employee's morale.

Kube et al. (2011)[27] conducted a field experiment to check whether employee's performance was affected by wage cuts or wage raise. Data was collected from library to be catalogued and task was to enter description of books into an electronic data base. Data was collected in three phases in the year 2006, 2008 and 2011. The researchers concluded that wage cuts had a detrimental and persistent impact on performance whereas wage raise did not result in any productivity gains.

Mahmood and Ali (2011)[28] conducted a study to find out the factors of moral imagination affecting the decision making process of management in Pakistan. Data was collected by simple convenient sampling using questionnaire and online web-based methods from employees of all categories (top, middle and low) of public, private, semi government and NGO. 23 employees responded online and 90 filled the questionnaires. Data was analyzed by using SPSS and Liseral 8.80 software. The researchers concluded that the moral imagination and mutual benefit decision were significantly associated and empathy, egotism and dogmatism had a relationship with moral imagination. The researchers also found that mutual benefit decisions were significantly associated with discerning moral issues and developing alternatives but not associated with demographic imagination.

Ngambi (2011)[29] conducted a study to address the problem of low morale of employees in the Memphis Fire Department (MFD) resulting in low productivity and personal growth and how to improve it. Data was collected through interviews, surveys and questionnaires. A total of 5 interviews, 678 successful surveys and 17 questionnaires were taken for the study. The researcher concluded that low morale level of the employees could be lifted by making full use of all employees, recognizing them, work in team, encourage employees to grow and show confidence, listening them, share experiences with them, empower them, provide sufficient training programs, be open and honest, make promotional system fair, make committees to solve morale problems etc.

Wu and Wu (2011)[30] conducted a study of employee dissatisfaction with organizational change resulting in huge labour turnover and hostility towards management in the relationship between employee's morale and productivity of Tulsa Fire Department, Oklahoma and what measures should be taken to improve employee's morale. Data was collected by two methods. Firstly, data of twelve months worth in the form of quarterly reports for District 4 "C" platoon

and secondly, survey method morale and to improve employee's morale measures like positive reinforcement, employee input, feedback and empowerment should be adopted.

Zakaria et al. (2011)[31] conducted a study to find out the relationship between employees' perception on transparency, fairness, controllability and reward values and employee's performance at Toyota company. 82 Questionnaires comprising of several questions were given to employees' at Toyota. Data was collected and analyzed by using SPSS Version 16.0 through Descriptive data and Correlation. The researchers concluded that all factors were not significant to contribute employee's performance. Even transparency factor which gave the highest degree of contribution was not significant. Only monetary rewards were not significant but non-monetary rewards were also important to get the win-win situation.

Patterson et al. (2013)[32] conducted a study to investigate how demographics, workplace environment and Empirically Supported Treatments (EST) used affected the worker morale in mental health organizations which are strongly encouraged to implement EST; however, little is known about their working environments. Data was collected from 1273 workers from 55 different programs in a single, large organization about organizational culture and climate (OCC) and worker morale. A multilevel regression analysis was used on worker demographics to predict worker morale and EST use and OCC scales to predict program-level worker morale. At the end result was found that worker morale was significantly negatively correlated with EST use and significantly correlated with OCC dimensions. Regression results showed that culture and climate but not EST use predicted morale.

Conclusion

It can be concluded from the above studies that different factors had an impact on employees morale. The organizational culture and employees morale had a positive relationship between them (Baehr and Renck, Kasal, Kaur, Spangenberg). McKnight, Lowe et al., Mani et al., Wang, Patterson et al. concluded that workplace environment had an impact on employees morale. Closeness of management relationship with employees, healthy and safe workplace, training, performance evaluation etc. had positive impact on employees morale. Neely and Lloyd had proved that higher employees morale increases productivity. Ward has viewed that stress due to leadership problems, lack of trust etc had a negative impact on employees morale. Everest,

Valves and Kube et al. found employees morale was directly related with motivation. Similarly Ostroff found that organizational performance was improved with higher employees morale. Day et al., Lalla and Riley viewed that organizational policies had an impact on employees morale also.

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