Progressing Organisational Behaviour towards a New Normal

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ABSTRACT: The economic and social impacts of the coronavirus pandemic have affected organisations and businesses in multiple ways. The lockdown restrictions implemented by governing bodies, have resulted in organisations changing their behaviours from conventional methods of face-to-face engagement in physical settings, onto digital platforms. This study aims to identify the challenges pertaining to organisational behaviour during the covid-19 pandemic. Recommendations are made to facilitate organisations to implement changes in their behaviour and enhance employee engagement in the new normal world. This study is implemented through a systematic review of published and grey literature sources. Results indicate that motivation, adaptation, continual learning and building trust are challenges important to overcome within the new normal world.

KEYWORDS- Behavior, Business, Covid-19, Economy, Organisation

INTRODUCTION

Many organisations deemed successful before the coronavirus (covid-19) pandemic, have faced numerous challenges to maintain sustainability during the unprecedented circumstances. The economic and social impacts of the coronavirus pandemic have affected organisations and businesses around the world in multiple ways [1]. Many societal disparities have been highlighted pertaining to normal social, economic, and political activities [2]. The lockdown restrictions consisting of self-isolation, quarantine and good personal hygiene were measures implemented by governing bodies aiming to protect societies from the deadly virus [3]. It was, initiated through the public health emergency announcement by the World Health organization [4] as the virus impacted two-hundred and ten countries, territories, and two international conveyances [5]. Consequently, societal disruptions and staying 'safe at home' constituted to impacts on global economies as individuals stopped entering business premises in a physical context. This affected the ways in which individuals, businesses and consumers communicated with each other [6]. To continue operating, organisations have been required to adopt or accelerate business strategies that integrate virtual platforms as primary modes of serving their consumers and connect with employees, partners, and colleagues.

Many individuals have faced prolonged periods of physical isolation from community life. Businesses and individuals have resorted to operating from virtual platforms, where companies continue to offer services to customers from remote locations. The pandemic has served organisations with the opportunity to re-evaluate their organisational structure, values, and associated behaviours at each level [7]. However, while re-constructing, the organisations are contending with economic and individual uncertainties relating to stability, increasing revenue, and engaging employees and consumers through appropriate organisational behaviour and preparation towards a world post-pandemic. The covid-19 pandemic has changed people's perceptions and behaviours; therefore, organisations have been aiming to re-create and implement new approaches to sustain their organisations. A vital element of this process is organisational behaviour towards engaging employees. The term organisational behaviour refers to "the critical analysis of individual and group performance in the workplace" [8]. It relates to employee regulation, appreciation, and prediction within organisations. The primary aim of the majority or organisations, it to make sure that the goals set but accomplished [9].

Objectives

This study aims to identify the challenges pertaining to organisational behaviour during the covid-19 pandemic. Recommendations are made to facilitate organisations to implement changes in their behaviour and enhance employee engagement in the new normal world.

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METHODOLOGY

This study is implemented through a systematic review of published and grey literature sources. A well-planned search is carried out using manual and electronic databases including Google scholar, JSTOR, Gateway, Scopus and Blackwell synergy. Literature sources are identified, extracted, analysed, interpreted, and evaluated. A preliminary literature search is conducted using the following key words: organisational behaviour, covid-19, business, employers, employees, new normal. Numerous literary sources have been identified; therefore, the following exclusion criterion is devised:

- Literature relating to organizational behavior only before the covid-19 are excluded.
- Literature in languages other than English are ignore.
- Literature providing insufficient information within their approach are omitted.
- Literature reflecting on employee engagement only before the pandemic are omitted.

The search has resulted in a total of twenty-seven literature sources to be assessed. When analysing the literature in more detail, two are duplicated and consequently disregarded. The abstracts and introductions are read in detail, this has led to two literature sources being omitted, leaving twenty-three literature sources for further investigation. After reading the full texts, one is not used due to a lack of implementation details. This has left a total of twenty-two literature sources meeting the overall criteria and used within this study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results indicate that motivation, adaptation, continual learning and building trust are challenges important to overcome within the new normal world.

Motivation

During the covid-19 pandemic with a transition to remote working, the need for goals within an organisation is vital, to provide individuals with the motivation to succeed and increasing organisational productivity. However, it is necessary to identify integral relationships within the organisation, that influence human control and mechanisms controlling human interactions. For organisational sustainability, it is favourable for organisations to identify employee behaviour and shape behaviours through cultivating a conducive working environment ensuring efficiency. According to Zhang, 2000 an organisation has eight goals of organisational behaviour within the workplace. Employees must experience job satisfaction which can be achieved through good employee management. This ensures that the appropriate candidates are selected to attain the goals efficiently set by the organisation using effective strategies. Through this method, the organisational culture that has been harboured over the years is continued, progressing towards its ultimate mission. This requires effective leadership within the organisation and effective conflict resolution. Through cultivating understanding between employees and employers, there is a better working relationship which creates a healthy working environment. The effective management of employees creates a strong team that works together to face challenges which constitutes to better productivity. The organisation can motivate employees to achieve goals and exceed through rewards, recognition, and incentives. Organisations recognise the importance of maintaining a work-life balance as reducing stress and preventing employees burning out at work, hence management should aid their employees to create this balance [10]. In contrast, through experiencing positive emotions, employees are engaged in their work which in turn creates a positive impact on their performance [11]. These individuals involve themselves in activities and attain high job performance, indicating individual performance is directly and indirectly linked with employee engagement [12] which is shaped through organisational behaviour. The level of stress encountered within the organisation affects employee performance levels. Stress at reduced levels is necessary to generate performance drive and motivation to succeed, however high stress levels can cause mental instability [13]. This impinges upon energy levels, reducing productivity and social engagement in the workplace or on remote working platforms. Mental health challenges have been heightened during the pandemic, particularly due to lockdown restrictions and concerns regarding virus transmission rates. Although individuals have been staying safe at home, the relaxation of national governing body regulations has created concerns with returning to the face-to-face situations to continue their employment duties. During this transition, many employees may not clearly understand their role, affecting performance levels constituting to underperformance. Within the home environment, employees may be distracted by family duties and a lack of space to work from home. Therefore, external factors like domestic or social concerns can impinge upon work performance and concentration [2]. Performance levels within an organisation are affected by cognitive and physical skills, as an individual experiencing high stress levels and other challenges, typically changes behaviours towards reduced productivity towards organisational objectives. In a similar context, employees who need to develop critical thinking skills will experience problems when encountering situations that require those skills [14], particularly during periods of change into the new normal world.

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To ensure positive progression towards achieving the organisational objectives, employers are required make sure that their employees possess the appropriate skills and knowledge. Within the organisation, it is likely that an amalgamation of individuals from diverse cultures and backgrounds will constitute to the workforce with differing behaviours. Thus, to reach organisational goals, it is imperative for organisations to manage their diverse population of employees. There are a series of disciplines involved in ensuring an organisation possesses an effective and robust relationship between employers and employees. Sociology is a dominant factor in creating a foundation for human behaviour, political and medical sciences are also deemed as contributing factors [15]. There is a robust relationship between political science and organisational behaviour because power, influence and authority are all exhibited within organisations. This can impact employees in various ways, one of which is work-related stress which can be diagnosed through medical science. Hence, generally the behaviour of individuals within an organisation can be influenced by different communication strategies, employer and employee development of attitude, patterns of learning, styles of leadership, how conflict is solved, the responsibilities and roles of individuals and stress management [16]. In every organisation there are three levels of behaviour comprising of: individual behaviour, group behaviour and organisational system behaviour, all of which contribute to the human output within the organisation [17]. There is a difference between the three behaviours however, they are the fundamental foundation to building organisational behaviour. The individual level determines the group behaviour, and the group behaviour determines behaviour within the organisation. As a result, it is imperative for managers to identify behavioural limitations at individual level as this can change the dynamics within the overall organisational behaviour [9].

Adaptation

The covid-19 pandemic has created a culture where employees are working in physical solitude with virtual connectedness. Hence, they have had to adapt from face-to-face interaction to utilising technological methods, comprising of hardware and software from remote locations. Therefore, it is more important for organisations to stay well connected to their employees as success depends on employees and the organisation as illustrated in the organisational behaviour model in Fig. 1.
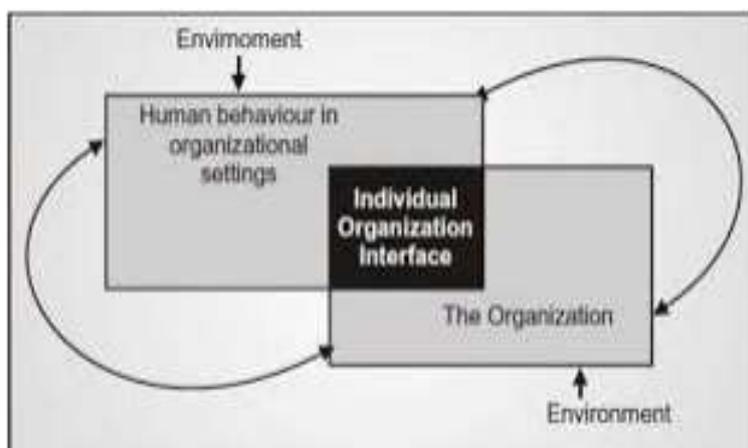
Figure 1. Organisational Behaviour Model [16]

In the implementation strategy, organisational behaviour can be defined as the differences between employees [15]. They demonstrate varied levels of attainment influenced by their socio-economic background. To ensure business operations are progressing well, it is the manager's duty to monitor their employees. The success of an organisation and the yielding productivity is largely dependent upon employee motivation. If employees are prepared to participate and become more involved in organisational activities, teambuilding can strengthen organisational dynamics and facilitate positive behaviour [17]. Managers should ensure that the implementation of policies protect and respect human welfare and dignity. Simultaneously, they consume the role of harbouring a strong social structure, through which managers ensure members of their organisation maintain healthy interpersonal relationships. Through working together during the pandemic and beyond, organisations can benefit particularly when all employees and leadership work in unison towards the common goal. The organisation benefits with an increase in profit, while the employees benefit from their remunerations and motivational incentives. There is a need for organisations to manage the behaviour and skills of their employees effectively to ensure organisational goals including macro and micro tasks are achieved. This will increase productivity and stimulate the generations of new goals, for example developing employee quality service in the new normal world [9].

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Continual learning

The progression of organisations into a new normal world is through promoting the acquisition of knowledge and skills aimed at all employees and managers. The use of diverse learning resources and trainers from different cultural backgrounds, will create a healthy collaboration consisting of an all-inclusive learning situation. This will ensure all employees are provided with equal learning opportunities, to gain organisational training and personal development. Managers within the organisation should provide employees with the tools to overcome challenges and instil empowerment and positivity to ensure daily operations are carried out with care and precision, particularly when working from remote locations. This differs to physical collaboration to overcome challenges that were encountered prior to the covid-19 pandemic, as management and colleagues were physical present for assistance. The tools and knowledge acquired will improve the level of employee and customer engagement within the organisation, facilitating organisations towards their goals. The continual technological developments within the world and implementation of different software's and artificial intelligence within organisation, employees are required to continue learning to stay updated with the new advancements. Many organisations have started to use chatbots which can also be referred to as virtual assistants, IM bot, chat robot, or virtual assistant to engage customers, with automated fast response [18]. However, instant chat is also performed through human resources and requires continual knowledge on software use and organisational products. Thus, employees must be motivated to accept change and innovation towards progression within the organisation. Without the technological know-how, employees can be at risk of losing their jobs particularly while working from home during the pandemic. Together with cultivating a conducive working environment and promoting continual learning, the organisation must teach and demonstrate ethical behaviour that will assist in managing employee behaviour in the new normal and beyond. This will facilitate the progression of positive organisational behaviour, but also constitute towards consumer retention as customer services are improved.

A variety of organisational behaviours contribute towards gaining new knowledge impinging upon performance, people skills, behaviours within the organisation, attendance and employee productivity relating to turnover [16]. The way in which organisations can assess employee performance is through formal assessments aimed at differing occupational roles within the organisation. Managers currently use a series of metrics to aid in the employee evaluation process to identify the quality and quantity of each employee. They can use graphic rating scales, evaluations forms, feedback, self-evaluation [19]. It is the role of managers within the organisation to establish employee efficiency and productivity thereby ascertaining employment promotion opportunities, rewards and incentives, termination of employment or provide additional work. They can track, evaluate and observe human behaviour within the organisation and take appropriate action to ensure that behaviours are aligned with company processes.

Building trust

Organisational behaviour is built on trust, particularly when employees are working from home. Results have indicated that employee performance is dictated by their treatment within their place of work [9]. Higher performance has been established within organisations where employees are treated well in a fair and just manner, in comparison to those not treated fairly. Through cultivating a positive relationship with the employer, employees feel more motivated to work hard and be more productive. This allows the trust within an organisation to flourish, promoting collaboration towards attaining organisational goals. Fair treatment is reflected through high employee performances and recognition of good work associated with rewards, promoting better work performance [17]. The attitude of employer and employee will determine the success of an organisation and through this they will also attain job satisfaction. When organisational managers understand individual employees' personality types, they can assess qualities that can lead others and contribute to organisational development. For example, employees who illustrate diligence are effective in the work they carry out. They may display trustworthiness, consistency, motivation, and the ability to drive the organisation towards its goals, hence consume more responsibility, attain more rewards and incentives. Organisational behaviour has limitations that the managers must be aware of, as every challenge cannot be solved through human resource. Some strategies developed to address employee conflicts may fail due to employee frustrations and a lack of understanding. Organisational intervention may only decrease the frequency by which behaviours occur, opposed to eliminating the behaviour.

CONCLUSION

This study has deduced that organisational behaviour displayed by an employee, group and organisation is imperative to the future success of an organisation in the new normal. Employee engagement and motivation has an influence on their performance quality and their participation within the organization. Employees cultivate job satisfaction, which is driven by the organization's overall achievement. During the covid-19 pandemic numerous employees have been working from home,

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therefore organisations have found different methods of cultivating employee engagement to help facilitate their behaviours towards organisational behaviour. Challenges like motivation, adaptation, continual learning and building trust are challenges that can be overcome and re-created in the new normal. With high employee engagement, there is an increase in productivity and job satisfaction. When employees have the confidence that they can yield consistent results, they immerse themselves in working towards attaining their goal, becoming more competitive psychologically and physically.

Recommendations

There is a need for businesses to invest funding into progressing their organisational behaviour management, to facilitate appropriate change within the new normal world. Through appropriate employee training at the individual level, then at group levels, organisational goals already set can be accomplished. Simultaneously, by cultivating a community that follows behavioural standards set by the organisation they work for harbouring good ethical behaviour, progressing into the new normal world will be made easier.

Organisations should identify challenges that occur during business operating hours including shortages of employees, a lack of planning, poor organisation, or inadequate control. Therefore, planning from the outset is key to manage organisational behaviour and reduce risk of problems.

Cultural diversity within organisation is strength when there is understanding and open-mindedness, therefore organisations should aim to build bridges by creating cultural behavioural awareness between employees with sensitivity and acceptance.

Technology has been adopted vastly by organisations during the covid-19 pandemic, therefore the use of interactive videoconferencing technologies can be adopted to allow interaction within organisations. However, adopting virtual behaviour, following guidelines that have been set by the organisation should be followed by all employers and employees. All employees should be provided with the sufficient technological training and knowledge, attain appropriate skills to make their occupation easier and used for organisational progression.

It is also important for organisations to ensure all employees have a conducive working environment as this will determine their progress. This can be maintained by cultivating strengthened social relationships between employees and employers.

The covid-19 has not been eradicated despite the development of vaccinations; therefore, it is important for organisations to learn from teachings during the pandemic and apply them as necessary in the new normal world with better preparedness, to progress organisational behaviour into the new normal world.

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