

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INFORMATION INTERPRETATION AND EMPLOYEE AFFECTIVE ENGAGEMENT: A LITERATURE REVIEW

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Abstract

Information interpretation is the process of giving general meaning to generally distributed information. Information interpretation enhances the employee affective engagement, based on the fact that employees' become emotionally invested to work and job task. But despite the importance placed on information interpretation many employees are void of the energy and enthusiasm required for their jobs. Hence, this paper establishes the relationship between information interpretation and employee affective engagement. The use of human capital theory and conceptual analysis were adopted to espouse the managerial practices that facilitate the learning process leading to employee affective engagement. The paper concludes with managerial and policy implication.

Keywords: Human Capital, Interpretation, Learning, Engagement.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Organisations are increasingly faced with dynamic environment with rapid and constant change. The business environment today is characterised by uncertainty, complexity and competition which has forced organisations to satisfy customers' ever-rising expectations (Edmonstone, 2018). Hence, organisations are continuously in search of innovative programmes and strategies to achieve set goals. These are often implemented to improve products' development efficiency and competitive differentiation which are the outcomes of organisational learning.

Organisational learning is the capacity of an organisation to acquire, utilize, and share information (Chiva

and Habib, 2018). Organisational learning is the cognitive and social processes of information acquisition, distribution, interpretation and organisational memory that are imbricated in organisational work practices. Extant studies have shown that organisations learn more when they develop greater information interpretations (Chiva and Habib, 2018; Hans, 2018). This process is used to give general meaning to information and to also diminishes the ambiguity that could be related to information. With interpretation, information is moved beyond individual limit to a shared meaning and understanding between individuals and groups (Stigliani and Ravasi, 2012).

Hussain and Ishak (2017) propose that information interpretation enhances the affective engagement of employees as it improves their decision making abilities. Affective engagement leads to the emotional connection of employee with others and the organisation. Affectively/emotionally engaged employees have positive feelings about their work and organisation. They have increased task effectiveness, team spirit and high levels of organisational citizenship behaviour. They are less likely to indulge in activities that deter the organisational image. Kahn (1990), postulated that affective engaged employees are aware of the organisational work practices and business environment. As a result, they work well with colleagues to improve organisational job output and the development of innovative ideas for rapid changes especially in developing nation like Nigeria.

Extant, studies have shown that affective engagement is an essential component of organisations that operate in turbulent environments, in which information acts as a key resource (Edmonstone, 2018; Holtz, Kronberger and Wagner, 2017). Information interpretation will foster employee affective engagement, this is consequent upon the fact that employees' get emotionally invested in work/ job task which stimulates them to engage with task creatively. These trigger best practices in organisations. Based on this background this study will examine the role of information interpretation in facilitating employee affective engagement.

1.2. Objectives of the Study

The general objective of this study is to critically review the relationship between information interpretation and employee affective engagement.

The specific objectives are to:

- i. determine the relationship between information interpretation and affective engagement of employees and
- ii. examine the linkage between organisational memory and behavioural engagement of employees.

1.3. Research Questions

Based on the problem statement, the following questions were formulated to guide the study:

- i. To what extent has information interpretation influenced affective engagement of employees?
- ii. What is the relationship between organisational memory and behavioural engagement of employees?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 The Concept of Organisational Learning

Organisational learning is the mechanism used by the organization to keep themselves up to date and competitive. Organisational learning is the capacity of an organisation to acquire, utilize, and share information that would empower them to have high control in the global market place. This takes place when a unit in an organisation acquires information that is recognized as potentially useful to the organisation (Hartonoa, Wahyudi, Harahap and Yuniawan, 2017). The concept of organisational learning was introduced at first in the literature in the year 1963 by Kurt and March (Odor and Samuel, 2018) while Cangelosi and Dill (1965) were the first to introduce it with empirical analysis.

Organisational learning when successful paves way for the creation of an intelligent organization. Members of the organisation exercises their intelligence by improving services, co-creating products and solving problems to ensure smooth operation of the whole system (Arsad & Mahmood 2016). Organisational learning could be descriptive or normative. The descriptive learning has its origin in social psychology, cognitive psychology and neuropsychology. This is the organisational routine way of learning that includes information acquisition, distribution, interpretation and organisational memory.

2.2. Information Interpretation

Information is the greatest resource an organisation can possess to strategically gain more competitive advantage over their competitors. For organisations to compete with others successfully in a highly volatile and unpredictable business environment, information acquisition and interpretation capability is highly essential. Once information is acquired members of the organisation interpret them by discussing, painting, writing and blogging. Information interpretation explains behaviours that explain the reasons for tweeting and re-posting. Interpretation encourages learning by providing guidelines and procedures as way of synthesising past information for its application to new situations (Ogbari, Olokundun, Taiwo-Adelakun, Kehinde and Amaihian, 2019). Guidelines such as electronic email, team meetings, special expert's reports and forums are effective means of information interpretation.

2.3. Electronic E-mail

Intuitive information interpretation can happen through email. This occurs by organisational selection of email conversations and then transforming them to new information artefacts (Lichtensteina and Swatmanb, 2015). E-mail users can draw on the persistence of that means to make sense of the issue that is being discussed, and can even transform the conversation into object of conversation at times.

2.4. Team Meetings

This is an essential element for creating effective and efficient teams. Effective team meetings enable members to communicate well with each other. Team meetings also facilitate the cross-fertilisation of ideas. To fully achieve this, managers must ensure that team meetings are held regularly. According to Lichtensteina and Swatmanb, (2015) weekly meetings are the best because they keep team members focused and balanced on achieving meaningful outcomes. However, meeting regularity depends on the motivation and coordination of a group functions. Effective and efficient team meetings will lead to higher performance, better communication and cross fertilisation of ideas (Lichtensteina and Swatmanb, 2015).

2.5. Forums

Forum is an online discussion platform where conversations are held by people in form of posted messages. An online forum is a section of discussion on the website where the members can read up information and also respond to others posts. Depending on user's access level, information posted will have to be approved by a moderator before it becomes visible. Discussion in a forum's topic starts with a thread and can be replied to by those who wish to reply. According to Kaur (2018), forum can also be called a bulletin board, group, message board or online discussion. Forums, just like every other internet learning environment provides the ways of achieving communication for members that could not meet personally but just logging-in to acquire information. Proper use of online forums enhances the effectiveness of organisational communication and information interpretation (Holtz, Kronberger and Wagner, 2017).

2.6 The Relationship between Information Interpretation and Affective Engagement

Information interpretation is the process used by organisations to give a general meaning to distributed information. This is when meaning is made out of the newly acquired and distributed information. Huber (1991) proposes that individuals and groups have previous belief system that gives meaning to their information. These belief systems/structures are stored as a rule-base and are automatically applied to the incoming information so as to form meaningful information that can be stored. The relations between the stored rules, mental models and interpretation are important to understand how organisations learn.

Organisations learn more when they develop greater and different interpretations. The reason for information interpretation is to diminish the ambiguity that could be related to information. Ambiguity is the existence of contradictory, multiple and explanations of the information available. Jones (2010) proposes that information interpretation enhances the affective engagement of employees based on the fact that employees' become emotionally invested to work and job task (Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995). Once information is acquired organisations interpret them via electronic email and team meetings. This form of information interpretation enhances employee affective engagement.

Affective engagement is employee's desire to do exceedingly and effectively well in other to attain a psychological contract with the organisation that was not initially present. Emotionally engaged employees are having control over work-life balance with no traits of burnout. They have high levels of organisational citizenship as well as increased task effectiveness. They are less likely to indulge in activities that deter the organisations image or general performance. Employees that are emotionally engaged have positive feelings with about work and organisation. According to Kahn (1990), emotional engagement is the ability to empathize with others at work and feel satisfaction or dissatisfaction at work. In relations with emotional

engagement, there could also be negative emotions involved e.g. exhaustion, frustration, to mention a few.

2.7 The Relationship between Organisational Memory and Behavioural Engagement

Organisational memory is the organisational repository where information is stored for future use. Organisational memory provides understandings into the organisations acquired, distributed and interpreted information. The content of the information could be soft or hard data. Soft data could be in form of expertise, tacit know-how, experiences and anecdotes while hard data are numbers, facts, figures and rules. According to Gunu and Sanni, (2016) organisational memory helps to retain human learning in form of procedures, routines and even when they are no longer in the organisation, the information has already been memorised. Learning becomes short-lived in organisation when they fail to store already generated information during the acquisition, distribution and interpretation process.

Organisational memory is used to create a common body of information as sub-processes of learning. Organisational memory as a learning sub-processes also relate with other sub-processes especially information interpretation (Salau, Osibanjo, Adeniji, Igbinoba and Ogueyungbo, 2018). This is because the ability of organisation to store and retrieve past information shape employee's interpretations of past actions effectiveness, which influences current new information interpretation. Interpretations may in turn result in actions that trigger scripts for encoding and storing the lessons learned. Gunu and Sanni, (2016) proposes that organisational memory fosters the behavioural engagement of employees expressed in active participation in job task and persistent effort. This is consequent upon the fact that organisational memory which is the process that encodes store and retrieve information often leads employee initiatives and proactive behaviours which are evidence of employee behavioural engagement (Argyris and Schon, 1978).

Behavioural engagement is the displaying of behaviour that work beyond the terms of contract by employees. This is employee's ability to go beyond to get work done for their organisation. It involves the ability for employees to engage physically to their work. Behavioural engagement display how employees work at with the organisation in mind (Allen and Meyer, 1997). Intention to stay in the organisation as well as leave it, extra time, energy and cognitive alertness are indicators of behavioural engagement (Kahn, 1990).

2.8 Theoretical Review

The following theory is used as the underpinning theory for information interpretation and employee affective engagement.

2.9 Human Capital Theory

The term of human capital was propounded in 1979 by the winner of Nobel Prize in economics. According to this theory every human being possesses abilities which could be acquired or innate (Febriansyah, 2016). Human capital can be defined as the skills, knowledge and abilities possessed by human beings. According to Febriansyah, (2016) Human capital is the knowledge (Physical and intellectual) and skills that is possessed by employees that make them productive workers (Febriansyah, 2016).

The theory moved on to explain that investment in human capital should be geared towards the increase of worker's productivity and performance. Human capital investment such as coaching, guidance and training is a good opportunity to build an engaged workforce and increase the market position of an organisation. Training is an important aspect of human capital acquired by employees and its often associated with a particular skill set and of technologies important in a particular industry. Training can be a little more complex, this is because it is difficult for an employee to make all the investments by himself (Febriansyah, 2016). Organisations need to make training investment in workers, and often bear a large part of the costs.

3. APPLICATION OF THEORY TO THIS STUDY

Human capital is the most essential assets an organisation can possess while further investment in training increases the quality of organisations workforce. Employees as a result of human capital investment are exposed to personal development which fosters their unique contribution in response to the business changing environment. Furthermore, human capital investments such as trainings, regular team meetings sharpen employee skills set leading to effective information interpretation and employee engagement.

4. METHODOLOGY

Review research design was used in this study and recent articles on information interpretation and affective engagement in some databases like SAGE, EBSCO, Elsevier among others were reviewed extensively in this study. The research method adopted is conceptual analysis. However, conceptual analysis is largely

considered a beneficial method of inquiry particularly when the goal of the analysis is to analyse concepts into their constituent parts in order to gain knowledge or a better understanding of a particular philosophical issue in which the concept is involved (Olokundun, Moses, Falola, Ibidunni, Salau, & Oluremi, 2018). Therefore, this paper reviewed extant literature on information interpretation and affective engagement in order to gain knowledge and better understanding of the relationships between the concepts in the context of Nigeria.

5. CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

The aim of this study was to demonstrate that a significant relationship exists between information interpretation and employee affective engagement. It is vital to note that information interpretation have become a point of emphasis based on its implications for facilitating organisational learning. In the same vein, this study proposes a conceptual relationship between information interpretation and affective engagement. This confirms the studies of Nonaka and Takeuchi, (1995) and Kahn (1990), that employees' become emotionally invested to job task in the process of information interpretation. Finally, this study proposes a conceptual linkage between organisational memory and behavioural engagement. This view was supported by Argyris and Schon, (1978) Gunu and Sanni, (2016), who postulated that organisational memory fosters employees' behavioural engagement. This study suggests that organisational learning such as information acquisition; interpretation and organisational memory are considered essential for achieving employee behavioural and affective engagement.

Managerial and Policy Implications

- i. Managers should ensure that team meetings are held regularly for effective organisational communication and cross-fertilisation of ideas.
- ii. Organisations should ensure the storage of already generated information for its future use.

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