

Organisational Behaviour: Individual Issues-Attitudes and Roles

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Abstract: This paper examined the nexus between organizational behaviour and the individual issues of attitudes and roles. A review of extant literature unveiled the following expositions: individual issues of attitudes through the individual perception and knowledge, feelings and the way they behave impact on how roles are discharged which in turn impact on organizational behaviour; roles conflict, roles ambiguity and roles incompatibility negates smooth organizational behaviour which affect employees performance. From the foregoing, it was inferred that there is a nexus between organizational behaviour and the individual issues of attitudes and roles.

Keywords: Organizational behaviour, attitudes, roles, roles conflict, roles ambiguity, roles incompatibility

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1. Introduction

Organizations are made of individual employees with different attitudes employed to discharge certain role to enable the achievement of predetermined goals and objectives. These attitude and roles are individual issues and the field of social psychology is regarded to be synonymous with the concept of attitudes (Thomas and Znaniecki, 1918; Borgardus, 1931). This depicts its imperativeness and has attracted attentions in organizational studies. So is roles in an organization which indicates behaviour to perform task of a given position (Armstrong, 2003). These individual issues of attitudes and roles have great influence on behaviour of employees in an organization. While attitudes are regarded to be district and indispensable concept (Allport, 1935; Gawronski, 2007), there is still debate about what its proper definition should be (Early and Chaiken, 1993; Fazio, 1995; Zanna and Rempel, 1988; Gwaronski, 2007). Despite this debate attitudes both at individual and work-related levels are crucial for employee effective performance.

On the other hand, roles played in an organization are also crucial for effective performance of an organization. Although, Mintzberg (1973) came up with managerial roles which seems

to described the manager in an organization to have put on a “coat of many colours”. There are still concerns over the roles of organizations at large. For Mintzberg (1990), it was ten different roles grouped under the interpersonal roles, informational roles, and decisional roles. All show-casing what managers do at different times. Genilloud and Wegmann (2000), looked at “role concept and why it makes sense” as a way of giving meaning to roles as a concept and how it is relevant in organization. The study argued that “a role always belongs to a specific large behaviour that involves other roles called a collaborative behaviour”. Some early scholarly works on roles are Mead (1934), Linton (1936), Parson (1951), and others. These research studies were useful in subsequent organizational studies till to the present and depicting the relevance of roles to an organizational employee.

Several organizational studies have been conducted such as origin of attitudes (Allport, 1935), functional approach to attitudes (Katz, 1960), classic tripartite nature of attitudes (Rosenberg and Hovland, 1960), history of attitudes and persuasion (Brinol and Petty, 2012), a new model of work role performance (Griffin *et al.*, 2007) psychology of attitudes (Eagly and Chaiken, 1993), attitudes and cognitive organization (Heider, 1946), implicit social cognitive: attitudes, self-esteem, and stereotypes (Greenwald and Banaji, 1995), attitudes and persuasion (Petty and Cacioppo, 2018), gender: stereotypes and roles (Basow, 1992), attitudes and expression of motor behaviour (Darwin, 1965), roles in sociological field observations (Gold, 1958), and others. But not quite much have related these individual issues of attitudes and roles to organizational behaviour which is our focus. As a result of global economic challenges, cultural diversity and technological advancement, facing workplaces, attitudes and roles which are individual issues have been affected. Managers and other organization employees continuously are faced with attitudes that are dynamic, roles that are unstable and are incompatible to their expectations which have resulted to conflicts, poor performance, and others. These have not only affected individual issues of attitudes and roles but organizational behaviour. Other scholars have studied it in their divers’ ways but our focus is to ascertain the nexus between organizational behaviour and individual issues of attitudes and roles.

The purpose of this paper is to discuss how the individual issues of attitudes and roles impact on organizational behaviour. The relevant components of attitudes are examined, attitudes theory and its importance. Also roles, roles ambiguity, role incompatibility and role conflict relatively to organizational behaviour is examined. The paper is structured in the following sequence: while this section introduces the very essence of the paper, the next reviews extant literature on attitudes, roles, and organisational behaviour. Thereafter, the nexus between attitudes, roles and organisational behaviour is established, followed by conclusions. This is followed by organisational behaviour with specific look at its historical background, meaning and its relevance.

2. Organization Behaviour

Historical Background of Organization Behaviour: Organizational behaviour started with the incorporation of the different views from great philosophers like Plato who wrote on the essence of leadership, Aristotle who wrote on persuasive communication, Niccolo Machiavelli whose work is the foundation for the contemporary work on power and politics in organization. Others are Adam Smith who in 1776 clamoured for a new form of structuring organization based on division of labour. The German Sociologist Max Weber is credited with work on rational organization and charismatic leadership. Frederick Taylor came up with systematic application of goal setting and rewards of employees as a way of motivating them. Thereafter, Elton Mayo and his colleagues carried out another useful study on how to

improve productivity at Western Electric's Hawthorne Plant in the United State of America (Mustafa, 2014).

The above mentioned are not the only people who contributed, others are scholars like Chester Barnard, Henri Fayol, Frederick Herzberg, Abraham Maslow, David McClelland, Victor Vroom, Herbert Alexander Simon and James G. March to mention but a few. These various contributions constitute to what is presently studied as organisational behaviour. As mentioned earlier, organizational behaviour borrowed some useful concepts from the other fields of study like social psychology, sociology, anthropology and history.

Meaning of Organizational Behaviour: Clegg *et al.*, (2008) referred organization behaviour to be the study of human behaviour in organizational context. It focuses on the individual level (individual issues), the group level and organizational level. These individual issues of attitudes and roles determine performance level in an organization. For instance, if an employee is aware that certain attitudes attract punishment, such will be avoided. But in a situation, where the same individual employee knows that certain level of performs deserved praise and recognition such will be esteemed. It is also important to state that, understanding roles performed by employee will reduce conflict in an organization.

According to Frederick (2014), organizational behaviour focuses on how to improve productivity, reduce absenteeism, turnover and deviant workplace behaviour, and increase organization citizenship behaviour and job satisfaction. Also, accordingly Robbins (1998) and Frederick (2014) "organizational behaviour is seen as a systematic study of the actions and attitudes that people exhibit within the organizations". Waller (2015), states that organizational behaviour is a discipline of social science that seeks explanations for human behaviour in organizations. Furthermore, Robbins *et al.*, (2014), state that it is a field of study that investigates the impact that individual, groups and structure have on behaviour within an organization, for the purposes of applying such knowledge towards improving an organization's effectiveness.

The component areas dealt with in organizational behaviour includes the work environment which covers human attitudes, cognition and behaviour. It also includes contributions from other fields like psychology, social psychology, sociology and anthropology. These contributions affect the study of ways employees behave in an organization. It is the concern of managers and researchers in organizational behaviour to find a work-life balance, and ensure improved ethical behaviour (Aridichivili *et al.*, 2009) in work places. According to Ashkanasy and Darris (2017), organizational behaviour studies how people behave in organizational work environment. The way employee behave impact on the level of productivity, job satisfaction, job performance, turn over intentions, withdrawal, workplace deviance etc. From the above, it our desire to establish that organizational behaviour is the study of human element of an organization and the interaction with both human beings and his work environment based on the culture that pervades in the workplace.

3. Attitudes

Origin of Attitudes: The term attitude refers to the posture of one's body (Gaston, 1884) which in the view of Darwin (1965) is the expression of motor behaviour. The concept of attitude has it origin in the history of social psychology and was seen to be single most indispensable concept in the field (Allport, 1935). Allport (1935) affirmed that study of attitudes started around 1888. This was when a German physicist Lange, L. who was an assistant to Wilhelm Wundt found out that a person that was asked to concentrate on being

ready to press a key at the beginning of a stimulus did that more rapidly to the stimulus presentation than the person who was asked to concentrate on incoming stimulus itself. Lange views that anticipatory phenomenon as tasks attitude.

In a different scenario, Kiesler *et al.*, (1969) linked the study of attitudes to the early work that was done on individual differences and that the concept of attitudes was used to determine consistency in a person's behaviour. According to Brinol and Petty (2012), another use of the concept of attitude is traced to the socialist Thomas and Znanieck (1918) in their book 'The Polish Peasant in Europe and America'. In their view, social psychology was regarded as a science of attitudes with attitudes being the most important needed to understand social change. They referred attitudes as conscious experience, and their primary function was to explain individual difference in reaction to socially significant object like out group person, legislation and institution. This effort in no small measure was a forward step in the study of attitudes. The above mentioned view on the concept of attitudes is a peep into the origin of the study on attitudes.

Meaning of Attitudes: In the view of Bizer *et al.*, (2003), attitudes is a global and relatively enduring evaluation of a person, object and issue - a representation of whether we think the target is generally good or bad, desirable or undesirable. Allport (1935), also defined an attitude as "a mental or neutral state of readiness organized through experience, exerting a directive or dynamic influence on the individual's response to all objects and situations to which it is related". This implies that attitude helps an individual in making meanings of situation or circumstances he or she came across in life situations. In the view of Rosenberg and Hovland (1960) attitudes have the classic, tripartite nature namely cognitive, affective and behavioural components. Attitudes, also is seen in terms of our likes and dislikes, what we esteemed or not esteemed, what we honour or dishonour. Attitudes can be tangible such as objects like table, trees, bags, cars etc. It can also be ideas likes wealth, policies etc. It can be issues such as salary increase, minimum wage, etc in an organization. Attitudes are affected by cultural factors such as norms and values. Others are behaviour of management otherwise refers is as management style, policies like those that concern pay, recognition and quality of work life, and lastly influence from the group (Armstrong, 2003). Attitudes functions in several ways to an individual employee in an organization. As opined by Katz (1960) it serves as a utilitarian function which enables a person to achieved rewards and avoids punishment. It also serves as ego-defensive function that fosters our self-image.

An attitude is seen as an evaluation of whether the object been evaluates is liked or disliked (Armstrong, 2003; Makin *et al.*, 1996). Attitudes are formed via experience but they are less stable as compared to traits because it can change or given way as new experiences are gained (Armstrong, 2003). This means that employee in organizations are likely to change their attitudes as time progresses. Certain experience is capable of changing an individuals' attitude either positively or otherwise. Eagly and Chaiken (1993) state that attitude is a psychological tendency that is shown in evaluating a given entity with certain degree of favour and disfavour.

In another way, Schwarz argues that attitudes are constructed on the spot, despite the fact that they are assessed directly with standard self-report measures or indirectly through implicit measures (Schwarz and Bohner, 2001; Gawronski, 2007). Other scholars have put it differently that attitudes serve to organize and structure a rather chaotic universe of objects (Fazio *et al.*, 1984; Katz, 1960; Smith *et al.*, 1956). Smith *et al.*, (1956), further saw it in terms of a ready 'aid in sizing up' an object and even events in a given environment.

Organizational employees as asserted earlier in the paper stands to greatly benefit from understanding of attitudes of their superiors, subordinates and peers. In our view, the concept of attitudes is the ways by which individuals respond to the evaluation of issues, objects, events, and situations in an environment to express their likeness, unlikeness and or undecided. This corroborates the views of Allport (1935), Katz (1960) and Armstrong (2003) to mention but a few.

Attitudes Theory: The attitudes theory discussed in this paper is attribution theory. Attribution theory basically looked at how we as individuals or people make judgements about people. It might be about colleagues at workplaces. We passed judgment based on our perception, form opinions and ideas about others and social situations (Heider, 1955; Armstrong, 2003). Armstrong (2003) has stated that one ought to draw a distinction between what the person can achieve and its effect on environmental influence. If such is not done, the individual will give a wrong judgement about persons and situations.

Also, attribution theory is useful in identifying the key characteristics that will allow for the received of message and its interpretation in a uniform manner among organisational employees (Kelly, 1967, 1973) Based on the situational aspects, the theory of attribution enables the individual to confidently attributes to cause-effect relationships based on the degree of distinctiveness, consistency and consensus (Sanders *et al.*, 2008). An employee who displayed certain attitudes based on certain situation is said to attributes based on situation. The way an employee attributes can be regarded as a display of an attitude. This makes attribution theory of importance and relevant to the study of attitudes. In fact, Weiner (1974) as cited in Armstrong (2003) believed that those who have high level of achievement attribute it to effort and ability factors and failure to lack of such factors in an individual. This means that attribution is the basis for determining success or failure among organisational employees.

Components of Attitudes: In the view of Rosenberg and Hovland (1960) attitudes have classic tripartite nature namely cognitive, affective and behavioural components. The cognitive component includes perceptions and knowledge of the attitude object, typically represented through stereotypes (Donat *et al.*, 2009). In fact Donat *et al.*, (2009) have advocated that attitudes towards internet are expected to be cognitively complex and evaluatively simple. They further state that it may be as a result of feeling of good or bad about it without the supporting cognition. The study was conducted to ascertain attitudes of people towards the use of internet. Also, since the cognitive component borders on knowledge of an object, what happens to when new knowledge comes as a result of new information on the subject matter? This can lead to attitude change. It has been seen that people who have the cognitive capacity to retrieve the negation tag from their memory which is the reduction of impact of previous evaluation will certainly result in having a strong influence of newly acquired attitudes on deliberate evaluation (Gawronski, 2005).

The affective or emotional component depicts the feelings towards the attitudes object (Donat *et al.*, 2009). In course of evaluating an employee, the manager may feel good or bad about a particular employee. Such emotional attitudes will certainly affect the merit of the evaluation. For instance, employees may like a certain boss because such is a Pastor and hate another because such is an addicted smoker with the perception that smoking is dangerous to one's health. Behavioural component of attitudes is the way by which the attitudes we have impact on the way we behave towards an object, issue or situation within and outside the organisation. According to Donat *et al.*, (2009), the behavioural or conative component

answers the questions of acting towards the attitudes object. According to Daft (2005), the behavioural component of attitudes predisposes a person to act in certain way and it can be illustrated in a scenario where a given leader might avoid the employee or refuse to make him/her part of certain activities. This could play out for instance in a situation where the leader was to recommend for activities like conference but acted otherwise towards a particular employee.

Importance of Attitudes: The imperativeness of the study of attitudes cannot be over-emphasized. Attitudes function in several ways to an individual in an organization. Attitudes can serve as an important tool for explaining the adoption and diffusion of new technologies (Donat *et al.*, 2009). It is also useful in the evaluation of employee performance in an organization. Attitudes play a vital role in determining the disposition of consumers towards a particular product of an organization. Attitudes also help an individual in making meanings of situation or circumstances he or she came across in life situation. As opined by Katz (1960), it serves as a utilitarian function which enables a person to achieved rewards or avoids punishment. Attitude is also seen to serve as ego-defensive function that fosters our image. Elsewhere, it is stated that attitudes serve four major functions for the individual such as

- (1) The adjustments function
- (2) The ego defensive function
- (3) The value expressive function and
- (4) The knowledge function (Katz, 1960).

In addition attitudes determine meaning, reconcile contradictions, organize facts and select facts as well (Wisdomjobs.com).

The adjustments function of attitudes make people (employees) adjust to their work environment. New employees are new comers to a workplace and the adjustment to their environment is an adjustment attitudes function. The ego-defensive functions protect an individual self-esteem or justify actions that make us feel guilty. It also serves as value expressive attitudes which enable the expression of one's value. The knowledge we acquire enable us to predict the likely future happening. This is useful in understanding events around us in the world and it is part of the knowledge functions of attitudes. The above is to be followed by roles, specifically looking at its meaning, roles ambiguity, roles conflicts and role incompatibility.

4. Roles

Meaning of Roles: A role is a set of connected behaviours, rights, obligations, beliefs, and norms as conceptualized by people in a social situation. Roles are occupied by individuals, who are referred to as actors. According to Armstrong (2003), roles indicate specific forms of behaviour required to carrying out a particular task or the group of tasks contained in a position or job. This view by Armstrong also shows that role is capable of influencing behaviour at work. This is especially in the case of the role profile which concerns behavioural aspects of the work as well as the outcomes expected of an individual to achieve. Organization is a social system and a role is the part of the social system (Draft, 2005).

According to Daft (2005), an organizational role is an opportunity to use one's discretion and ability to achieve an outcome. Elsewhere, it has been stated that a role is a set of connected behaviours, rights, obligations, beliefs, and norms as conceptualized by people in a social situation. The business dictionary defined role as a prescribed or expected behaviour associated with a particular position or status in a group or organization while roles are jobs

or positions that have a specific set of expectations attached to them. This also shows that organizations are made up of jobs and positions which exemplified the roles performed by different employees. Furthermore, according to Armstrong (2003), roles indicate specific forms of behaviour required to carry out a particular tasks contained in a position or job. This view by Armstrong shows that role is capable of influencing behaviour at work. This implies that success recorded by an employee depends on how he/she discharged the roles of the position occupied by the person. It is note-worthy to state that roles and attitudes are critical to effective organizational behaviour.

Roles in organization can be formal or informal. The formal roles are the set of official behaviours performed by employees as part of his job descriptions and are guided by organization policies. The informal roles are those that are not directly related to the job like organizing birthday party, rewarding out-standing employee at end of year party and others.

Roles Ambiguity: This occurs when the people are not certain or clear about their expectations within a given role, typically their roles in job or also workplace. It is usually when there is no clear definition of the person's job and it seems to be vague or poorly defined. Roles Ambiguity refers to the lack of specifically and predictability for an employee's job or role functions and responsibility (Kahn *et al.*, 1964; Bechr, 1976; Tang and Chang, 2010). Tang and Chang (2010) state that role clarity refers to how clearly a set of activities expected from a person are expressed. The reverse becomes role ambiguity (Jansen and Gaylen, 1994).

Role ambiguity significantly affects the performance of roles of an employee in an organization and his overall performance. This creates problems for organizational productivity. This together with role conflict result to organizational tensions that originates from personal, interpersonal and organizational factors with its attendant negative effects (Katz and Kahn, 1970; Fisher, 2001; Fichter, 2011).

Role Conflicts: Role conflict occurs owing to simultaneous happening of two or more role requirements, which performance of one role makes performance of the other challenging and difficult (Katz and Kahn, 1970). According to King and King (1990) and Lee (2010), these requirements are seen to mount pressures or demands on a given position. According to Katz and Khan, (1978), role conflict results from two or more sets of incompatible demands which involve work-related issues. As organizations have increase demands on job holders; so is increase pressures on how to deliver on such expectations or demand. All managers have multiple roles to play in their organizations. The demand on each at times conflict with each other but the ability to handle them makes the manager creative. Studies have shown that role conflict might enhance creativity (Tang and Chang, 2010).

Furthermore, Rizzo *et al.*, (1970) state that role conflict is the incompatibility of requirements and expectations from the role, where compatibility is judged based on a set of conditions that influence role performance. Putting its differently Kopelman *et al.*, (1983) opined that role conflict is the extent to which a person experiences pressures within one role that are incompatible with pressures that arise within another role. For the purpose of this paper these views of Katz and Khan, (1970, 1978) Lee (200), King and King (1990), Rizzo *et al.*, (1970), Tang and Change (2010), Kopelman *et al.*, (1983) suffice.

Role Incompatibility: This is an incompatible expectation which occur between members of the role set about their given roles. This can occur in the relationship between the superior and the subordinate in an organization the superior expects the subordinate to accept a set of

instructions hook line and sinker but the subordinate feels such expectation is autocratic in nature. Such is a demonstration of incompatibility between the both parties. According to Armstrong (2013), stress and poor performance may be a result of roles which have incompatible elements owing to clash that occurs between what the people expect from the role and what the individual believe is demand of them.

5. Attitudes, Roles and Organizational Behaviour Nexus

It was earlier established that attitudes and roles are critical to organizational behaviour. Work place attitudes such as job satisfaction, job involvement, organizational commitment and organizational loyalty are crucial in determination of organizational behaviour. Kurt Levine also states that behaviour is a function of the personality and the environment. Attitudes are an aspect of the personality of the individual. Rosenberg & Hovland (1960) classified attitudes into three components namely cognitive, affective and behavioural components. It thus implies that behavioural component deals with the way we behave towards object, issue or a given situation in the organization. In the view of Daft (2005) such an attitude predisposes a person to act in a particular way. This implies that employees acting in a particular way determines organizational behaviour and is a function of attitudes of the individual.

Another area of relationship in this regard, stems from behavioural modification. Elsewhere, Deborah Teasley defined behavioural modification as the techniques used to try and decrease or increase a particular type of behaviour or reaction. It thus implies that attitudes can be used to modify behaviour in an organization. Some of the identified techniques are positive reinforcement, negative reinforcement, punishment, flooding, systematic desensitization, aversion therapy and extinction. Depending on what organizational managers want to achieve at a particular time. Also, organizational managers use attitudes to predict behaviour in an organization. Since the cognitive component of attitudes is seen in terms of perception and knowledge of attitudes object (Donat *et al.*, 2009), such perception and knowledge can be used to predict the behaviour of an individual employee in an organization. The affective component expresses feeling towards object, issue and situation (Donat *et al.*, 2009). Therefore such feeling is a tool for prediction of the behaviour in an organization. This has influence or impact on organization behaviour.

Workplace attitudes help managers in determining the level of job satisfaction in an organization. The role an employee plays can either be satisfactory or unsatisfactory. Generally, unsatisfactory roles negatively affect the commitment employees indicate at work. Organization assigned task to employees that forms their roles and in the view of Armstrong (2003) these roles are regarded as specific forms of behaviour required to perform tasks. Thus, it implied that roles relate to organizational behaviour.

Furthermore, organizational loyalty is a job attitude; therefore in achieving utmost task performance in a given role, loyalty is expected of the role player. This shows that there is a relationship amongst attitudes, roles and organizational behaviour. Absence of high level loyalty on the part of employees, negatively affect the role he/she performs in an organization. In addition, role ambiguity and role conflict affect the behaviour in an organization. Waller (2015) associated organizational behaviour to the explanation gotten from the behaviour of human element of an organization. Therefore, behaviour gotten in the presence of role ambiguity and role conflict certainly affect the behaviour of human being in the organization which impact on performance, productivity and employees satisfaction.

6. Conclusions

The imperativeness of individual issues of attitudes and roles to organizational behaviour cannot over emphasize. The following conclusions are drawn from the review:

1. The perception and knowledge of an object, issue and situation impact on roles and behaviour of individuals in an organization.
2. The feelings of the attitudes towards object, issues and situation affect the discharge of roles thereby influencing organizational behaviour.
3. The way the individual behave towards the roles performed influences organizational behaviour
4. Attitudes can be used as behavioural modification tool to achieve desirable behaviour.
5. The roles discharge by an individual influence organizational behaviour
6. The level of employee involvement determines the level of organizational performance.
7. Workplace attitudes helps managers to achieve job satisfaction
8. Role ambiguity, role conflict, role incompatibility impact negatively on organizational behaviour.

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