



Organizational Behaviour, Management Theory and Organizational Structure: An Overview of The Inter-Relationship

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ABSTRACT

The paper presents an overview of the organizational behaviour (OB) and its relationship with management theory and organizational structure. It examined the concept of organizational behaviour from a number of perspectives exploring the prevailing definitions and the scope of the discipline. The relationship between OB and management theory was examined and it was noted that OB is an offshoot of management theory, and a macrocosm of the component theories in management theory, where the mainstream management theories have contributions towards the development of OB as a field of study. The exploration of the link between OB and organizational structure revealed that both are interactive. Structure affects OB at all levels and OB determines the choice of structural design. The promotion of work behaviour that enhances productivity and organizational performance constitutes the nexus between organizational behaviour, management theory and organizational structure. The specific areas of management which constitute the subject areas for OB analysis include leadership, power and authority relations, interpersonal communication, conflict and attitude development & perception among others. The paper presented the major contemporary challenges in management theorization which are amenable to OB analysis to include internationalization, workforce diversity, production quality and productivity, employee empowerment, change management and ethical behaviour.

Keywords: Organizational behaviour; Management theory; Organizational structure Interrelationship; Contemporary issues

INTRODUCTION

The construct "Organizational Behaviour" commonly abbreviated as "OB" is evidently a combination of two separate constructs, "organization" and "behaviour" both of which are features of human character, relationship and existence. Therefore to understand the meaning of "Organizational Behaviour", there is need to first understand the concept of 'Organization' and 'Behaviour' respectively. An organization can be defined as a social group where the component entities work together for the purpose of achieving some common goal. Robbins (1998) defines it as "a consciously coordinated social unit, composed of two or more people, that functions on a relatively continuous basis to achieve a common goal or set of goals."

Behaviour can be defined as the outward expression of feelings toward someone or something. It is a response shown in action by a person to some situation or something which affects him/her. Both constructs revealed that human beings interrelate and interact in group setting and exhibit their intent and desire as well as dissatisfaction overtly or covertly. As members of the group or organization interact and interrelate with one another in a bid to achieve the common goal, they inevitably express their feelings actively towards one another either as

individuals or as groups within the larger group or organization. The pattern of interactional relationship aimed at achieving the set group goal is defined and bounded by certain parameters. These parameters determine, guide and shape the behaviour and actions of the group both as separate members and as one entity (jointly). Thus the parameters provide the framework for the group interactional relationship, and within which the organization, essentially must operate to achieve her goals. The specified pattern of relationship within the organization has commonly been referred to as the structure of an organization. In general, organizational behaviour theory explains behaviour in the context of organization (group relationship and interaction) within certain structure.

Organizational structure is an essential component of organizational system and creating an effective structure for an organization is a critical task in management process. The relevance of structure in organizational system makes it an important focus in management theory. Understanding that organizational behaviour is linked with organizational structure evidently indicates that organizational behaviour is critically associated with management theory and an important focus in management theory discourse.

This paper explores and examines the scope of organizational behaviour (OB) and the interface between OB and organizational structure; and the relationship between organizational behaviour and management theory. The objective is to provide an understanding on how OB and organizational structure can be managed jointly to yield positive effects interchangeably to improve organizational performance; and to provide a basis for effective discussion of management theory within the context of organizational behaviour and its theorization.

METHODOLOGY

The paper is a theoretical discourse. It draws from contemporary issues in the literature on OB, organizational structure and management theory to explain the tripartite connection between the three concepts; and using the current realities in work settings as a reflection of the nexus. Specifically, the application of OB to practical management process and its relevance as the foundation block of organizational structure forms the background for the discussion in the paper. The discussion was based on the information generated from the review of the relevant literature and observed workers' current behavioural patterns and attitudes as well as management decision processes in organizations.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Meaning of Organizational Behaviour

Organizational behaviour is a field of study which draws from various dimensions of social systems and fields of study dealing in human behaviour. Because of its multi-disciplinary nature and multi-dimensional focus, scholars in the field have defined it differently with all of the definitions revolving around behavioural dynamics in organization. Essentially, OB is an organizational (or group) phenomenon. It is both research and application oriented (Kreitner and Kinicki, 2001). Kreitner and Kinicki (2001) state that, "it is not an everyday job category" like professional jobs. This implies that OB is not a profession nor a practice but a research based system for providing knowledge and understanding about human behaviour in organization and how to manage human behaviour in consonance with organizational goals. It is a method for understanding the causes and effects of human behaviour in organizations. OB is horizontal discipline that cuts across every job category, providing every job category with a source of knowledge and expertise to handle human interaction and behaviour within the organization. The plethora of definitions on OB cannot be exhausted in one paper, therefore this paper only attempts to present some of the leading definitions on the subject.

Robbins (1998) defines organizational behaviour as “a field of study that investigates the impact that individuals, groups and structure have on behaviour within organizations for the purpose of applying such knowledge toward improving an organization’s effectiveness.” This definition suggests a number of things: (i) OB is distinct area of expertise with a common body of Knowledge. (ii) OB studies three determinants of behaviour in organizations – individuals, groups, and structure. (iii) OB applies the knowledge gained about individuals, groups, and the effect of structure on behaviour in order to make organizations work more effectively (improve organizational performance). From the definition of Robbins (1998) it is clear that OB in all its ramifications is concerned with the study of what people do in an organization and how their behaviour affects the performance of the organization. Impliedly, a good OB theory attempts to explain why individuals and groups behave as they do.

Moorhead and Griffin (1995) defines OB as “the study of human behaviour in organizational settings, the interface between human behaviour and the organization, and the organization itself.” The definition specifies that the focus of OB is on three elements, viz, human behaviour (this is about the individual) in the organization; the behaviour of the organization as whole or work groups within it; and the interactional link between the individual behaviour and organizational or work groups behaviour. The component of interface between the individuals’ behaviour and the organizational behaviour indicates that the behaviour of both components affect, determine and influence each other interchangeably. Organizational behaviour is also defined simply as the study of the way people interact within groups (Sekaran, 1989).

Other leading definitions of OB include:

- (i) OB as “the study of how people act in an organization or workplace, and what motivates them to act that way” (Blunt, 1983).
- (ii) OB as “the study of both group and individual performance and activity within an organization” (Gladwin, 2016).
- (iii) OB as “the field of study that investigates how organizational structures affect behaviour within organization” (Daft, 1995).
- (iv) OB is “the study of structures, functioning and performance of organizations and behaviour of groups and individuals within them” (Pugh, 1971).
- (v) OB is “the study of the impact that individuals, groups, and structures have on human behaviour within organizations” (Ogundele, 2005).

In all of the definitions above and like most other definitions the word ‘study’ is commonly used, i.e. OB is viewed as a study of behaviour and its effects on organization. It studies people’s behaviour at work. This implies that OB is an academic destination. An interesting definition given by (Stogdill, 1972) is that OB is “the actions and attitudes of the individuals and groups toward one another and toward the organization as a whole, and its effect on the organization’s functioning and performance.” This definition is a radical departure from most others by excluding the use of the word ‘study’ and thereby making it less of an academic field. Apparently it focuses on OB as the behaviour itself and not the study of it. From this perspective OB is regarded as the development of attitude and actual expression of feelings by organizational members toward other members within the organization and the organization as a whole. Simply, OB refers to actions and reactions or counter actions within an organization both by individuals and groups as well as by the entire organization. The study of these actions and reactions and their effects on organizational performance is what constitutes the academic field of OB which most of definitions have captured as OB. In strict sense, the study of OB as an academic field does not translate to OB itself, and therefore, there is need for caution to define OB as synonymous with the study of it. In this paper the concept of OB is not used to connote academic field of study but to depict the actions and reactions of organizational members in

practical terms.

Scope of Organizational Behaviour

The scope of organizational behaviour has widened over time from its traditional elements of analysis to include other variables which behaviour affect the performance of an organization. The traditional scope of organizational behaviour consists of three internal organizational elements, viz, individuals, groups of individuals (work groups), and the organization as a whole (Wagner and Hollenbeck, 2010). The behaviour of these elements i.e. their actions, reactions and counter-reactions constitute organizational behaviour. The analysis of OB has hitherto been concentrated on these elements in terms of how their behaviour affects one another and organizational performance. Thus, attempts to understand OB has been based on understanding the behaviour of these elements, in terms of the underlying causes or determinants of their behaviour. Apparently, the traditional perspective limits the scope of OB to elements within the internal system of the organization. It integrates three concepts or levels of behaviour – individual behaviour, group behaviour and behaviour of the organization system as a whole. These determine the extent to which OB can govern or influence the operations of an organization.

The contemporary perspective which presents a wider scope of OB specifies OB to include behaviour of external variables which affect the performance of the organization and to which the organization also reacts. In this view, the scope of OB consists of behaviour of four elements, viz, People, Structure, Technology, and Environment (external social system). The people consist of the individuals and groups in the organization. They are the internal social system of the organization, and they generate behaviour through personality differences, differences in perception, group dynamics and group conflicts.. Structure consists of the system of coordination of roles and interrelationship and hierarchy of authority among members in the organization. It also includes the organizational culture. Changes in the structure (structural behaviour) can affect the other components of the organization and elicit behaviour from them. Technology imparts work environment (the physical and economic conditions within which people work), that is the nature of technology influences the work and working conditions, and therefore determine effectiveness and the way people behave largely. Environment influences an organization. The behaviour of the environment affects the organization either positively or negatively, and the organization must act in response to the behaviour of the environment. The inclusion of the external environment as a key element in OB reflects the fact that organizations are open system and do not exist in isolation, they operate within environment consisting of other entities with which they interact and depend on for survival. Their performance is affected and determined by the behaviour of the environment in which they operate.

However, within the confines of the organization's internal system the areas of focus in OB include motivation, leadership and power, interpersonal communication, group structure and processes, learning, attitude development and perception, change processes and management conflict, work design, and work stress management (Gracia and Keleman, 1989 cited in Robbins, 1998).

Organizational behaviour as a subject draws from different forms of behaviour and therefore the study of OB is based on contributions from diverse behavioural disciplines. The range of the constituent disciplines includes all disciplines which have influence on human behaviour in organization. However, Robbins (1998) identified the dominant disciplines as those of

Sociology, Social psychology, Anthropology, Political science. The constituent disciplines of OB contribute to understanding the subject at different levels.

Concept of Management Theory

Management theory is a set of interrelated principles which attempts to present in a coherent manner, loose facts about human behavior in organizations (Stoner, Freeman and Gilbert, 2001). It is simply a statement predicting which actions will lead to what results and why. Essentially management theory provides logical reasoning in the form of a set of broad principles that provide a general frame of reference by which management practice can be evaluated and the development of new practices and procedures are based. The most important goal of management theory is to provide a coherent set of logical principles that form the general frame of reference for the evaluation and development of sound management practices (Akpor-Robaro, 2016). The value of theories in management can be summarized in two points: They help in interpreting the present, to understand what is happening and why; and they help in making predictions (Christensen and Raynor, 2003). In other words “theories help to sort the signals that portend important changes in the future from the noise that has no strategic meaning”.

From this general view of the functions of management theory, it is without gain to say that management theory is an important tool in the practice of management. It is a means to an end. In other words management theory serves as a tool to increase the effectiveness of managers.

Relationship between Organizational Behaviour and Management Theory

In the analysis of organizational behaviour, reference is usually made to management theory, suggesting that OB has some association with management theory, that is, a relationship exists between them. OB is concerned with and studies human behaviour in organization, and how to elicit the best behaviour from organizational members. On the other hand, management theory is concerned with the nature of organizational activities and functions, processes and methods for performing them, environmental conditions (work conditions) under which they are performed, and the best approach for organization to achieve maximum performance. All of the components of management theory, which are individually referred to as management theories present different perspectives of these concerns and explain from their perspectives the best approach for organization to achieve maximum performance. Evidently, all of the concerns in management theory are subject to behavioural effects (they are affected and dependent on the behaviour of workers and their managers). Therefore attempts in management theory have from onset and overtime been mainly directed at how to achieve maximum organizational performance through the creation of systems and processes that enable workers to put in their best behaviour towards maximum performance. The effort in OB towards ensuring that organizational members exhibit the best behaviour at work is therefore a continuation of the efforts in management theory. Apparently, OB is an off-shoot of management theory. Essentially, the theory of organizational behaviour is a collation and synthesis of the relevant propositions in management theory. The theory of OB is based on the recognition that no one management theory can be effective in all organizational situations and it therefore represents a contingency perspective of the application of management theories.

Management theory provided the foundation on which OB developed. Evidently OB is the result of the evolution of management theory. In other words, OB has its roots in management theory, sucking ideas from its component theories. Evolution of OB can be traced through the phases of the development of management theory beginning with the ideas of early management thought by Adams Smith, Charles Babbage and Robert Owen; to the classical era of Frederick Taylor, Henri Fayol, Max Weber, Mary Parker Follet, and Chester Barnard, all of

whom laid the foundation for contemporary management practices; to the behavioural era with Elton Mayo, Hugo Munsterberg, Abraham Maslow, Douglas McGregor; and then to the behavioural science theorists, in the persons of Jacob Moreno, B.F. Skinner, David McClelland, Fred Fiedler, and Frederick Herzberg. The various aspects OB analysis derive from the theories of these people and as a maturing discipline, current OB research is aimed at the refinement of these theories (Robbins 1998). Thus, to discuss OB is to discuss management theories as a union.

Concept of Organizational Structure

Organizational structure has been defined in a number of ways, but simply, it is the work relationships among members of an organization. It is an organization's formal internal interactional relationship between role players in the organization. Robbins (1998) defines it as "how job tasks are formally divided, grouped, and coordinated". It specifies roles, authority, and communication channels. Daft (1995) notes that organizational structure would consist of six key elements: work specialization, departmentalization, chain of command, span of control, centralization and decentralization, and formalization. All of these elements affect the behaviour of an organization at both levels of analysis, in various forms. Operating an organizational structure can either be rigid or flexible but either way, the work relationship among members of the organization is affected both as individuals and as groups in terms of their work behaviour.

Relationship between OB and Organizational Structure.

Organizational structure specifies boundaries for organizational behaviour, and determines actions and processes within organization. In other words, the behaviour of members of the organization as individuals or groups or even the organization as a whole, would depend on the nature of the organizational structure. For instance, work specialization would eliminate diversion of workers' attention and increase effectiveness and efficiency. But it can also cause boredom through monotony of activity which may negatively affect the worker's behaviour. Chain of command specifies to whom individuals are to report, and to whom they are responsible; as well as the scope of authority allowed individuals in their roles. Span of control would affect the extent of effective coordination and supervision and this may affect the behaviour of both the supervisor and the supervisee. Centralization and decentralization have great implications for OB. At the organizational level decentralization makes the organization more flexible and responsive in its behaviour towards events. At the individual level, decentralization elicit participation, sense of belonging, and cooperation from employees, while in contrast, centralization breeds a feeling of alienation, not being recognized and appreciated, which can cause sabotage behaviour among employees. It reduces the capacity of individuals to exercise initiative to act and respond promptly to exigencies. Over-decentralization can also give room for negative behaviour by employees. Formalization is the standardization of jobs within organization. In short it is a way to programme job behaviour. Standardization affects job behaviour. As Robbins (1998) explains formalization limits the amount of discretion that the worker can exercise over his job. High formalization will make workers "to always handle the same input in exactly the same way, resulting in a consistent and uniform output. Where formalization is low, job behaviours are relatively nonprogrammed and employees have a great deal of freedom to exercise discretion in their work". Standardization does not only remove the possibility of workers to engage in alternative behaviours, but also can eliminate the need for workers to consider alternative ways.

In general, the degree to which organizational structure will affect organizational behaviour depends on the type of structure. There are a variety of organizational structure ranging from

simple structure, bureaucracy, and the matrix structure of the classical approach; to the team structure, virtual organization structure, and the boundaryless organization structure of recent management thoughts.

Organizational Behaviour can also determine the type of organizational structure. The type of structural design to be selected would depend on preferences of organization's members, and cultural norms. Beyond this, structural designs are determined by behavioural variables of an organization such as strategy, size, technology and environment.

In a nutshell, organization's structure helps to explain and predict behaviour. The formal relationship between people at work bears on their attitudes and behaviour to the extent that the structure of relationship helps to reduce ambiguity and clarifies employees concerns about what, how, where and to whom to report. Structure also constrains and controls what workers do, such that their behaviour is allowed to vary only within a narrow range. While the choice of structural design is determined by the organizational behaviour desired and expected.

Today's Issues in Management with Organizational Behaviour Interface

Basically the issues which confront managers in organizations, to which they have to find solutions, particularly in contemporary world where change is the only constant, and new developments and situation are frequently being experienced as a result of constant change, have interface with OB. In today's organizations dramatic changes are taking place and recreating organizations and environment of management. Some of these changes pose challenges and others provide opportunities. Managers rely on the Knowledge of OB to provide solutions to the issues and challenges. In this connection, some of the issues identified in the literature include:

- (i) Internationalization of human resource management. The world is today a global village and organizations now operate in environments other than their home countries and consequently, managers now have to relate with people from different cultural backgrounds both as bosses and subordinates to other people. In this connection they require people's skills that enable them function and cope with people from different cultures, whether they are in their home country or in foreign country. Such cultural differences would require managers to modify or change their behaviour and practices. Impliedly, globalization affects human resource management practices and systems (behaviour).
- (ii) Increasing workforce diversity: Managing increasing workforce diversity is an important broad-based challenge which confronts organizations today (Robbins, 1998). Workforce diversity refers to differences among people within a given society (Kreitner and Kinicki, 2001). The term is used to address intra-country differences among people rather than differences between people from different societies. Organizations have become increasingly more heterogeneous in terms of gender, race and ethnicity and the challenge for organization is how to accommodate the diverse groups in the organization with their lifestyles, needs, and work habits. It is no longer safe for organization to assume that people will over time imbibe new values of work introduced to them because in reality people hardly replace their ingrained cultural values and habits even at work. Thus the melting pot approach to differences in organization is giving way to one that organizational members are dealt with according to their differences (Thomas, 1990). The implication of workforce diversity for management theory is that organizations and their managers can no longer treat everyone the same. Managers must learn and recognize the differences in their workers and respond to them according to their differences both in training & development programmes, and benefit programmes, while at the same time avoiding discrimination,

in other to retain them and motivate them for higher productivity. OB provides the link for achieving this and to effectively management workforce diversity.

- (iii) Increased need for Product Quality and Employee Productivity: A major challenge for every organization today is how to increase productivity of employees and improve quality of products and services that it offers. This is particularly critical in the face of scarce resources and fierce market competition. To this end, total quality management (TQM) has been greatly emphasized by organizations. TQM is a management philosophy that is driven by focus on customer satisfaction through the continuous improvement of all organizational processes (Hackman and Wageman, 1995). Evidently, TQM cannot be implemented in isolation of workers involvement and input. As Robbins (1998) noted, managers have now recognized that, for any effort to improve quality and productivity such as (TQM) to succeed, it must include the employees. The employees will not only be a major force in carrying out changes but will participate actively in planning such changes. TQM “requires employees to rethink what they do and become more involved in workplace decisions” (Robbins 1998). The challenge for managers in the circumstance is how to get employees acceptance on the changes required and to be involved in the change process. OB provides managers the knowledge to work through those changes and how to get employees involved.
- (iv) Moving from employee control to employee empowerment: In today’s world, organizations are shifting from management control of employee to employee empowerment. Managers are putting employees in charge of their roles (Sahro and Das, 2011). Even the participative management approach which became a major paradigm in management is gradually fading away and being replaced by full responsibility for decisions by employees. In this process “managers are having to learn how to give up control and employees are having to learn how to take responsibility for their work and make appropriate decisions”. Organizations now need more of people with high decision making skills, high level of initiative and less supervision. This means that there is need to understand the characteristics of individuals who possess these qualities to fit them appropriately on the jobs particularly where their duties are critical to the success of the organization. The issue for managers is having to determine the persons with the right characteristics and build self-managed teams out of them that will work without conflict of values. OB has a role to provide the knowledge of persons who can work independently without undermining the interest of the organization; and knowledge about how to give up control and how employees can be made to take up responsibility for their work. Essentially, the implication of employee empowerment for OB is that there will be change in leadership styles, power relationships, work designs, and organization structure (Ogundele, 2005). All of these affect organizational behaviour
- (v) Continuous change in management environment: A major challenge for management today is how to manage ever present change in the organization. In all organizations change has become continuous in all aspects and activities of the organization, and managers have come to accept it as an ongoing activity for them. Before now, the environment of management was characterized by long period of stability, occasionally interrupted by short periods of change (Robbins, 1998). But the scenario of today is the reverse with long periods of continuous change interrupted by brief periods of stability occasionally. Every element in the organization including workgroups and teams, work schedules, actual jobs, internal processes (organization policies, procedures and decisions), objectives and external relationships are increasingly in a state of flux. Managers are now more concerned about how to accommodate and adapt to the changing circumstances than to create a stable environment which apparently is

increasingly becoming more difficult to achieve. Managers are looking towards flexible rules, processes and mechanisms. As Robbins (1998) put it, organizations are moving from stability to flexibility. This implies that organizational members must learn to cope with continuous change and how to live with flexibility, spontaneity, and unpredictability.

In all its ramifications, OB has enormous role in change management in organization whether as an internal organizational phenomenon or as an external influence on the organization. In the first place, continuous change in management environment would necessitate continuous change in OB as organizational phenomenon at both levels of the individual, group, and entire organization. Evidently, learning to adapt and doing things differently from what they were used to, is key to their behaviour and success in their roles. Secondly, as a field of study OB is burdened with the task of providing new insights into how organizational members can “better understand a work world of continual change, how to overcome resistance to change, and how best to create an organizational culture that thrives on change” (Robbins, 1998).

- (vi) Pervasive unethical behaviour in organizations: A major issue in management in today’s organization is the increasing level of unethical behaviour among members of organizations. Many members face ethical dilemmas day to day in their organizations, not knowing what is right and wrong conduct, while many of them consciously do the wrong things and justify their actions with all kinds of reasons and statements, even in such systems as educational institutions (e.g. higher institutions with an array of learned persons in the units and the various roles), where ethical conduct is expected to prevail and emphasized in practice. The situation is pervasive, cutting across all organizations and in all societies, and in different forms and shades.

Organizations have serious need to respond and find solutions to the problem by enshrining ways that will help to improve ethical behaviour of their employees and managers. In view of the increasingly negative effects of unethical behaviour on organizational performance and survival it is now critical for organizations to create a climate of work that is ethically healthy to enable their employees work productively with less ethical dilemmas, i.e. with a minimal degree of ambiguity as to what constitutes right and wrong behaviour. OB helps to work through this. The role for OB is to define in clear terms what constitute right and wrong behaviour in organization and to find mechanisms to mold, remold, modify or reverse and redirect the behaviour of individuals in organization towards what is right and ethical. How to achieve this is the burden for OB as a field of study and research area in management.

CONCLUSION

From the overview of the literature on the selected aspects of OB and the areas of practical application to management issues discussed in this paper, it is evident that OB is an inalienable part of management process and organizational structure. The goals of OB are quite interesting and germane to the solutions to the problems of today’s organization, particularly with reference to human resource management. The study of OB is relevant and important to industry because it provides knowledge on how people behave under a variety of conditions and why they behave as they do; how to effectively manage people; predict human (employee) behaviour; and ensure effective utilization of human resources. OB is maturing at a fast pace, but there are still challenges occasioned by a changing world, with effects on human perception and behaviour in organization. There is therefore the need for extensive research efforts to break new grounds for solutions to existing and emerging problems in organizations in a world of continuous change. The interactional relationship between management theory and OB on one hand and between OB and organizational structure on the other hand is evidently becoming stronger and more visible in the face of new demands in organizational

process. OB is growing and maturing as a tool for providing solutions to problems identified in management theory and practice.

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