

Employee Morale

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Human resource is considered to be the most valuable asset of any organization. It is the sum of inherent abilities, acquired knowledge and skills represented by the talents and aptitudes of the employed persons. It may be noted here that human resources should be utilized to the maximum possible extent in order to achieve individual and organizational goals. It determines the success and growth of the organization.

According to Motowidlo & Borman, (1977) morale '*...might be defined as a psychological state shared by members of a group that consists of general feelings of satisfaction with conditions that have impact on the group and strong motivation to accomplish group objectives despite obstacles or adversity.*' (Motowidlo & Borman, 1977, p 177)

Britt et al. (2007) defined morale as '*a service member's level of motivation and enthusiasm for achieving mission success*'.

Morale is a frequently used term especially in organization. It generally refers to esprit de corps, a feeling of enthusiasm, zeal, confidence in individuals or groups that they will be able to cope with the tasks assigned to them.

Employees have attitudes, feelings and emotions which play a vital role to determine their performance. These Feelings, emotions, sentiments, attitudes, and motives are referred to as employee morale.

Features of Morale

- Morale is a state of mind. It reflects mental health.
- It is the aggregate of attitudes, feelings, emotions, sentiments, etc.
- Morale is of two types.
 - Individual morale-which means a persons' attitudes towards life, and
 - Group morale, which implies the collective attitudes of a group of persons.
- Morale is a relative term. It may be high or low.
- Morale influences human behaviour and performance.
- Morale is a psychological feeling.
- Morale is intangible. It cannot be increased directly.
- Morale is a contagious phenomenon. Individuals transmit their attitudes to each other.

Importance of Morale

Morale is an important factor of organisational success. It influences productivity and the job satisfaction of individuals. Employee's morale could be high or low. High morale exists when employees attitudes are favourable towards their jobs, their company and their fellow employees. It is represented by the use of such terms like, spirit, zest, enthusiasm, loyalty, honesty, dependability, resistance to frustration etc. High morale helps achieve the organisational objectives efficiently and effectively. A high morale reduces absenteeism, labour-turnover, wastes and disharmony. Employees with high morale like their jobs and co-operate fully with the management towards the achievement of the goals of the organisation.

Low morale exists when attitudes inhibit the willingness and ability of an organisation to attain its objectives. If employees seem to be dissatisfied, irritated, cranky, critical, restless, and pessimistic indicates having poor or low morale. Low morale results in high labour turnover, monotony, work disturbances, high rate of Absenteeism, reduction in output and productivity, increased grievances, labour unrest etc.

Factors influencing employee morale

Employee morale is a very complex phenomenon and is influenced by many factors. These factors include, image of the organization, nature of work, the supervisor/ leadership, organizational policies; inter-personal relations, salary and other benefits; the attitudes of the top management to its employees organizational growth etc.

Measurement of morale

We shall now look at some of the measurement systems which have been employed to gauge the level of morale in organization. A sheer variety of measurement systems have been used for it.

There are two principal categories of measurement morale- (1) direct and (2) indirect. The indirect measurement systems can be further split into those which examine morale through its antecedents and those which use its consequences.

I shall begin by examining the direct measures of morale and then move to the indirect ones.

Direct single item measurement

Perhaps the simplest measure of morale is to ask people about it using single question/ item/ statement. Single item scales ask respondents to rate statement such as 'My morale is good right now' have been used extensively in morale research (Britt et al., 2004; Schumm & Bell, 2000). They are useful as they avoid having to define morale, instead tapping into the societal concept of what morale is. This is advantageous for the researcher as it cuts out a lot of confusion about what morale actually is, but dangerous as it shifts the onus of interpretation to the respondent and it may be that what one individual views as morale is not the same as another.

Direct multiple item measurement

This has also been a popular approach to morale measurement with a number of different approaches being adopted. This approach involves asking series of questions that constitute morale. Such techniques are more widely appreciated and practicable.

These multiple item scales have the advantage that internal reliability can be appraised using Cronbach's alpha and other techniques. The disadvantage is that the linkage between the scale identified and morale is often unclear. This problem of content validity is seen, Multiple item measures can potentially offer a number of disadvantages but care needs to be taken to ensure that it is actually morale that is being measured.