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STUDY OF ORGANIZATIONAL CLIMATE IN A VESSEL - REFLECTIONS ON THE CREW BEHAVIOR AND SAFETY

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Abstract:-

With the increasing number of organizations in the XXI century and against a background of rapid changes arising from the globalization process which affect the organizations as a whole, there have been changes in employment relationships, habits and even in the very culture of the organization, triggering conflicts between leaders and their employees. Within the labor world, every profession has its own characteristics and peculiarities which deserve special attention, as is the case of professionals working in the Fluvial Merchant Marine. They work on board vessels, in confined spaces, in some cases for several days consecutively, in a total isolated environment where rest itself occurs in the workspace without family or social life. This makes the vessel an atypical place to work which may generate interference with the right organizational climate. The purpose of this paper is to verify the threats and the opportunities of the organizational atmosphere in which the crew of a vessel are inserted, analyzing the well-being and the safety of officers on board. This study was carried out by means of the results obtained from a questionnaire applied to the river sailors and its comparison with the organizational climate seen in situ.

1. INTRODUCTION

According to Chiavenato (2002), organizations are composed of individuals and depend on them to achieve their goals of generating production and productivity and, therefore fulfil their mission. Also, people rely on organizations for their livelihood and thus achieve various personal goals, with a minimum cost of time, effort and conflict.

The incessant pursuit of quality and speed of services offered to clients of the organizations operating in the field of inland navigation, in addition to a job where employees are often in a regime of semi-confinement without the possibility of being ashore with their families may lead to a situation of distress between superiors and subordinates or even among co-workers.

Good services offered by companies must be related to their staff quality or intellectual assets, i.e., the company's policies about recruitment, selection, training, skills development, jobs and wages have become priority factors to understand and improve the level of satisfaction of employees. One way to assess and monitor employee development is through the Survey of Organizational Climate which is an important tool to enable the Organization to identify points that should be objects of action for continuous improvement.

2. METHODOLOGY AND OBJECTIVES

The methodology used at first consists of a research and selective literature review on the topic of "Organizational Climate", focusing on the main aspects of the topic in a categorical-deductive manner and, secondly, a field research by means of a questionnaire was developed. According to Marconi Lakatos (2006), this is a method of collecting data and it consists of an ordered list of questions that must be answered in writing and without the presence of the interviewer, which it will be as a "snapshot" of the feelings and desires of those who contributed to the research.

3. MAIN OBJECTIVE

The purpose of this study is to identify how the organizational climate is perceived by the employees of inland navigation companies, as well as the factors that may help the development of a friendlier and more motivating work environment which generates more satisfaction and commitment.

4. ORGANIZATIONAL CLIMATE

The organizational climate is a snapshot obtained by the researcher or observer when mapping and analyzing the internal environment of an organization at a given moment, which reveals the aspirations and expectations, satisfaction or dissatisfaction of its employees. Luz (2003, p.10) states that "organizational climate is the quality or property of the organizational environment which is perceived or experienced by the members of the organization and which influences their behavior." Moreover, according to Luz (1995, p. 06), the "organizational climate is a reflection of the mood or spirit of the people which prevails in an organization in a given period." The author mentions that the time factor is essential to understand the concept of organizational climate, for climate being the result of a variety of situations, it becomes unstable and therefore it can often be characterized either by a state of apathy and dissatisfaction or be seen as a state of excitement and satisfaction.

The climate is the feeling that employees have regarding their work environment. This feeling can mean tranquility and confidence or fear and distrust. The climate for increasing the effectiveness of the organization is generated by satisfying the needs of the participants and their motivation to achieve the goals of the organization.

Chiavenato (1999, p. 142) says that the organizational climate is related to the way people feel and the way they interact with themselves, with customers or with external elements. It is important to remember that people have different perceptions and therefore perceive the climate differently, so the prevailing sentiment is the organization's climate. Thus, one can perceive that the organization has a good atmosphere when its staff are motivated and involved with the company's projects and are willing to do their job without being told to.

4.1. ORGANIZATIONAL FACTORS AFFECTING ORGANIZATIONAL CLIMATE

By way of some variables, organizations exert influence on its employees. This influence can act to integrate and enrich the environment or can manipulate and separate people. The coercive attitudes often inhibit the talent of most employees, generating inadequate and negative behavior.

The organizational climate is determined by the motivations of individuals or by other aspects, such as leadership styles, communication, teamwork, salaries and development prospects, all of them affecting relationships. All organizations create their own climate according to the way these factors or variables are seen and worked by the employees.

This paper highlights some factors which can be used by managers or directors of river navigation companies, commanders of vessels or other professionals interested in the subject area, as a means of analytical instrument for improving the climate of an organization.

4.2. PLANNING

Most organizations examine this topic by focusing only on the managers' financial view, which emphasizes planning as a list of set goals and objectives, but unfortunately they forget to turn their eyes to their intangible asset: the workforce.

When planning the organization of work, the managers establish criteria or policies of recruitment, selection - internal or external - and training, recruiting only those applicants who are in line with the organization profile. Improving the planning and organization of work is not necessarily a complicated, expensive or lengthy process.

4.3-COMMITMENT AND INVOLVEMENT

Commitment is an ongoing process that evolves throughout life. Chiavenato (2002) explains that at any stage of life, especially in the early and middle adulthood, people can suffer major personality changes, some deep enough to be classified as transformation. He also states that there seems to be no ambiguity in the fact that the experiences that a man is exposed to, especially in adulthood, in his work environment and in contact with the mass media, are at least as important to determine the level of individual modernity he will achieve as the expectations at the beginning of his life. Leading organizations of a recent past which possessed large structures with an extended hierarchy and excessive bureaucracy, currently are the most fragile and deficient in terms of staff commitment and involvement and quite often are called "dinosaurs".

Organizations which seek to compromise and engage their employees with their projects in order to strengthen the institution and their staff are the ones that stand out in the present market. Involved and engaged staff produce more and develop new ideas, and thus avoid conflicts between subordinates and superiors.

4.4 COMMUNICATION

Since the emergence of the School of Human Relations, with Elton Mayo's innovative studies on behavioral and motivational aspects and informal groups, the positive effects of communication were perceived by managers and entrepreneurs, especially regarding communication between co-workers. In the past, the truncated communication protected by the rigid hierarchy caused alarming rates of human errors in all segments of business. Nowadays, internal communication is occupying more and more space within the organization, using policies for divulging the mission, values and goals of the company, smoothing the way for relations between subordinate and superior. The very use of technologies such as the internet, intranet and other forms of communication facilitate the work and minimize friction. (Maximian, 2012)

4.5- LEADERSHIP

Leadership is one of the strongest variables which affect the atmosphere of an organization. A good leader must be aware of the signs shown by the indicators of the organizational climate. With the current changes, attention should be given not only to the market and client, but also to the working environment in the organization.

Many mistakes are made by leaders in the external environment. According to Luz (1995), disrespect for employees as individuals is a critical factor. Some leaders invade privacy, mistreat people or use their power and influence to harass the employee.

There are also leaders whose severe and inflexible manners do not allow open discussion about problems at work, or even personal problems that often interfere with the job and organizational environment.

Another serious mistake is to underestimate the employee's competence. From the moment in which the leader has confidence in the work and ideas of his/her team, he/she transmits values and responsibility that motivates the employees' growth and creativity.

We know that leadership is a process in which the leader, under the influence and acceptance of the group, seeks the achievement of specific goals and objectives by means of mobilization, motivation, information and communication, management and conflict resolution, in addition to establishing strategies and policies. It's also known that there is no ideal type of leader for all kinds of organizations, but that respect, empowerment, as well as the pursuit of satisfaction and team commitment enhances the performance and relationships between leaders and subordinates (Luz, 1995).

4.6- TEAM

Currently, the style of supervision focused only on the manager or supervisor is losing ground to the so called work teams or self-managed teams.

According to Amarú (2006), the delegation of authority and the improvement of communication within a workgroup are mechanisms which create a self-managed team, in addition to advantages such as easy communication, autonomy and decision-making responsibilities. This also diminishes the cost of supervisory or management activities and facilitates the performance of duties.

4.7- MOTIVATION

Motivation has been one of the most studied topics in people management and still remains one of the most troubling aspects of daily life for organizations.

In Psychology, motivation corresponds "to a change in the organism that makes it move until this modification is reduced" (Piéron, 1964). "Motivation is defined as an impetus for action. And it's also translated as a necessity or tendency" (Piéron, 1964; Archer, 1997). Because it is impulse or necessity, obviously it originates primarily within the individuals. Enhancing motivation has been seen as a way to improve the professional performance with regard to both productivity and organizational health and employee satisfaction.

The manager may make use of motivational and behavioral theories proposed by the precursors of human resources management. One of them is Maslow with his "Theory of Necessities" who considers that every individual has personal and professional needs and as soon as one of them is satisfied he/she reacts positively to new stimuli.

The literature on this subject matter is extensive but not final or conclusive, so it's up to the manager to seek effective ways to achieve higher motivation, either by way of training, by setting up a more pleasant work environment, by offering better pay or by meeting some of his/her staff's needs.

4.8- INITIATIVE

Henry Fayol, when listing the secondary principles of his theory, describes “initiative” as the act of increasing zeal and activity of the agents.

Initiative can also be understood as the act of taking action, taking responsibility. Currently, companies look for professionals who are not only committed and involved with their jobs and team or with the organization itself, but who also have the insight and the ability to develop their own opinions and create their working model, and thus avoid overworking managers or decision-makers with routine activities.

5- Organizational Climate Survey

According to Toledo and Milioni (*apud* Luz, 1995, p.41), the organizational climate survey "is the examination of the organizational climate or culture of the organization, which identifies and assesses the attitudes and behavior patterns in order to recommend problem-solving actions policies, and so provides a real diagnosis of the internal climate in organizations.

The survey shows how employees feel like to be a member of the organization and helps identify and evaluate the negative attitudes and behaviors. Therefore, job changes and solutions to problems that affect the good atmosphere can be proposed.

Luz says that the survey also indicates trends in employees' behavior such as their willingness to support or reject campaigns promoted by the companies, as well as quality programs, actions for increasing productivity or even development of environmental awareness.

The purpose of these climate surveys is to improve the internal atmosphere, mapping problems in order to propose solutions and not culpability. The company's management board and their managers should take action to overcome such problems by providing all the necessary support for the development of their professionals.

The climate surveys are usually conducted by means of questionnaires which are applied to employees to attain their perception towards the organization. There can be open or closed questions about some variables of the organization, such as the employees' view of their work, the relationship between people and sectors, salary, leadership, communication, benefits, participation, teamwork, motivation, planning, and so on.

As stated by Sucesso (2002), the main factor for success of the survey is the correct use of the collected data. The result will point out the items to be worked on and opportunities for improvement. When one starts a process of a climate survey, it creates many expectations among employees, therefore the whole process should be conducted in a transparent and honest way so that the data and problems should be discussed openly and with maturity.

5.1-APPLICATION OF ORGANIZATIONAL CLIMATE SURVEY

According to Luz (1995), some precautions should be taken when applying an organizational climate survey:

The research must not ask for the employee's identification. This could affect the result abruptly, as he/she may be fearful of reprisals. The only recommended identification is of the department or sector where the employee works.

- a) The research should not be conducted by people who are part of the company's leadership or by anyone who can cause any kind of embarrassment for the employee.
- b) Issues investigated should be about problems likely to be solved, otherwise the whole process is useless or ineffective.
- c) The research should be applied to all the employees of an organization or to a meaningful sample so that the data obtained are a reflection of the reality of the environment.
- d) The questionnaire can be applied individually or in groups. The employee shall not take the questionnaire home or to the workplace because other people's opinions may influence their responses.
- e) The interval for the application of a new survey should not exceed two years.
- f) Questions on the same subject should be conducted at different times and addressed differently, so that the validity of the responses may be confirmed.
- g) The survey must not be applied after an extremely joyful or sorrowful incident so that the final result could be compromised.

Thus, it is understood that the organizational climate survey is essential to identify relevant factors in the individual's relationship with the organization. Also, the seriousness and professionalism in its preparation, application and analysis are key factors to the success and credibility for the entire process of changes.

5.2- DATA AND RESULTS OF THE ORGANIZATIONAL CLIMATE SURVEY

5.2.1- The on-board work and its specificities

As it has been said so far, the assumption underlying this research is based on the idea that the work done on board a ship with restricted access to communication can impact the lives of workers in the organizational climate.

The professionals / crew can thus be subdivided:

Fluvial Crew - Deck

- River Shipmaster
- River Pilot
- River Chief Officer
- Bosun
- River Deck Sailor
- Cook

Fluvial Crew – Engine Room

- Engine Supervisor
- Engine Conductor
- River Engine Sailor

5.2.2- Case Study

A survey in the form of a questionnaire was applied to a sample of Fluvial Merchant Marine Officers working on the Tiete-Parana Waterway in order to analyze their behavior in their environment and see how this behavior has an influence on the organizational climate and vice versa. To analyze this behavior, 45 officers responded to the survey.

5.2.3. - Age of interviewees

The age of the fluvial officers who answered the questionnaire ranged from 22 to 59.

5.2.4. - Work Shifts and Intervals

The work regime of the Fluvial Merchant Sailor ranges from 5 days to 25 days, and five days to rest. One of the differentiating elements of working in a ship is precisely the off-duty time, for being on board for several days, the hours spent on rest are enjoyed in the workplace, i.e., in confinement.

5.2.5. - Tabulation of data

E - Excellent B- Good R- Regular P- Poor

Table 1 - Survey Results

Chart: General data tabulation

Question 1- How do you consider the work on board?

Question 2- How do you feel when you come aboard at the beginning of a work period?

Question 3 - How was the adjustment period to the onboard work?

Question 4 - How is your relationship with colleagues when disembarking?

Question 5-What do you think about the isolation / confinement regime in the ship?

Question 6 - How do you see the security issue in the onboard work?

Question 7 - What is the physical space of the vessel like?

Question 8-How are the leisure activities in the vessel during the onboard period?

Question 9 - How is the food in the ship? Question 10 – What does it feel like at the time of disembarking? Question

11 - How do you assess the influence of human behavior (feelings: anger, aggression, calmness, sadness, joy, etc ...) in the onboard work?

Tabulation of data of questions 12 and 13.

Question 12- Is the salary compatible with your activities?

Question 13- Can the tensions generated by emergency situations (such as being onboard longer than planned) affect your job performance?

6 - Analysis and Results

When evaluating the results of the research carried out among the crew of a vessel of the TietêParaná Waterway, in relation to the work environment and to the work itself (questions 1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 8, 9, 10 and 13), we note that, in general, they are satisfied with the conditions set on the vessel, including their relationships with colleagues. It has been shown that it is a job that brings satisfaction.

Moreover, it was also found a high level of satisfaction in terms of remuneration (question 12). This issue is usually considered the "Achilles heel" in this kind of work due to the confinement, the distance from the family, the isolation and the few leisure options usually offered on board. However, in this case, the overall evaluation was positive.

The same can be said of the security issue (question 6), which is rated satisfactory (excellent and good) despite the confinement status and feelings of sadness and isolation resulting from this situation.

7- Final Considerations

The organizational climate survey enabled us to identify and assess the organizational climate within a riverboat on the Tietê-Paraná Waterway, and thus, enable the development of actions to improve the work environment and the performance of companies and people.

At present, when discussing ways of the worker's participation in the organizational dynamics of institutions in order to improve flexibility in labor relations (vertical-horizontal), it is important to identify the points of highest and lowest satisfaction for the worker within the work environment, mainly in activities characterized by strong hierarchy, rigid roles or atypical conditions, such as the case of professionals of the Fluvial Merchant Marine.

On that account, several were the positive points observed in the behavior of the River Sailor which have influence on the organizational climate, especially those related to food and pay.

Although the state of semiconfinement and isolation might generate a certain malaise or dissatisfaction owing to lack of social life and the absence of family, it is described as something "likely to get used to" for the great incentive for staying in this occupation is the financial security that provides good education for their children and family support.

Likewise, this distancing from people ashore and the restricted contact when one is on board, can be somewhat compensated for the existence of effective and rapid means of communication such as telephone, e-mail and other electronic devices.

It follows, therefore, that despite the negative aspects caused by the circumstances of semiconfinement and isolation, the positive factors proved predominant. However, there is always room for improvement in the navigation work environment, as the continuous pursuit of quality in service as well as the improving of the level of satisfaction of their employees must be the targets of companies and organizations in the contemporary world.

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