LACK OF FEEDBACK AND COMMUNICATION AS THE MAIN CAUSES OF NEGATIVE WORKPLACE ATMOSPHERE IN LABORATORIES

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REVIEW ARTICLE

Abstract
Workplace atmosphere and team cohesion play a crucial role in employee satisfaction and organizational success. This study examines two similarly sized laboratory teams to explore how communication and team-building strategies impact overall workplace mood. Results indicate that employees in the drinking and wastewater testing lab prefer longer, off-site team-building activities, while those in the beer quality control lab favour shared training sessions. Employees in the water testing lab often feel more overburdened and less appreciated, contributing to a negative atmosphere. The study highlights that communication challenges and a lack of feedback can lead to a loss of motivation, suggesting that tailored team-building programs and increased managerial support would improve workplace cohesion and satisfaction in both teams.

Keywords: *communication, team building, workplace atmosphere, workload*

INTRODUCTION

Workplace integration and socialization are of paramount importance for both the organization and the new employee. The effective integration of new employees not only serves to increase their immediate productivity (Kozák et al., 2016), but also improves their work performance in the long term and contributes to organizational success (Kun, 2010). In modern workplaces, managing generational differences and encouraging cooperation are increasingly becoming more important, which are crucial in ensuring coherence within the organization and achieving common goals (Pató et al., 2018). The role of competencies and personality traits is also fundamental in this process, as they determine how an individual can respond to job requirements and integrate into the organizational culture (Hegyi, 2012).

MOTIVATION

The issues of workplace motivation and employee satisfaction are of paramount importance for the successful operation of organizations. Motivational theories highlight that employee satisfaction is not only a function of salary or working conditions, while motivational factors, such as recognition and responsibility, are essential for long-term work efficiency (Győri-Lovász, 2023). The relationship between employees and managers, as well as continuous motivation, play a key role in increasing performance (Boda, 2016), since without the alignment of employee motivation and organizational goals, performance would decrease dramatically (Kőmüves et al., 2022). The different expectations and motivational needs of each generation may pose additional challenges in the modern labor market (Kőmüves et al., 2022). According to Jack Welch, the success of a company is determined not only by technical factors, but also by the product of motivated and committed employees (Boda, 2016). The concept of burnout is also relevant, as this phenomenon, which can develop as a consequence of chronic stress, affects not only professional performance, but also personal quality of life. Burnout syndrome also affects employee motivation and performance, so its prevention is vital (Vladár, 2016).

COMMUNICATION

Organizational structures and communication opportunities are closely interconnected, where the quality of communication has a decisive impact on the performance of the organization. Bavelas highlights that the communication patterns that develop within the group determine the structure of the group, the distribution of central positions and the problem-solving ability. The prisoner's dilemma is also a good example of how, in the absence of communication, groups are unable to cooperate for a common goal, so communication is vital in organizational life (Bakacsi, 2015). The need for communication skills is increasingly evident in

the workplace, especially in international environments, where employees from different generations and cultural backgrounds have to cooperate (Juhász, 2016). The efficiency of internal communication is influenced by group dynamics, a positive atmosphere, which is based on openness and cohesion, has a positive effect on the quality of communication; while bureaucratic, hierarchical structures often hinder the efficient flow of information (Berry, 1992). The diversity of language use and communication styles is decisive in workplace interactions. The differences between male and female language use and the flexible use of language variations allow individuals to shape their communication style depending on the situation and their goals (Schleicher, 2002). As a result, we cannot speak of a single, homogeneous language use pattern in organizations, but gender identity also plays a role in shaping workplace communication (Schleicher, 2002).

CONFLICTS

The study of workplace conflicts and their management has received significant attention in organizational psychology in recent decades. Classical organizational theory initially treated conflicts as negative phenomena that hinder organizational efficiency and cause disruption. According to modern approaches, conflicts are natural components of group and organizational functioning, and their emergence can even lead to positive changes, increasing the organization's flexibility and creativity (Bakacsi, 2015). Stress resulting from conflicts can seriously affect employees' performance and psychological well-being, as research on workplace stress has shown. The development of workplace conflicts and their resolution methods depend largely on the emotional state of those involved, and it is the responsibility of both managers and employees to manage them appropriately (Soltész, 2018). There are currently four different generations on the labor market – baby boomers, generations X, Y and Z – all of whom have different values and attitudes towards work. This diversity often leads to tensions, as generational differences can also be manifested in work styles, motivation and attitudes towards work (Szabó-Szentgróti et al., 2019). Stressors in the workplace, such as overload, role conflicts, and the need to adapt to changes, are all potential sources of conflict (Soltész, 2018). Another factor is the technological challenges of the fourth industrial revolution. Continuous change and the need for technological adaptation pose challenges that increase workplace tensions (Borbély, 2019). Individuals have different goals and motivations, and when these expectations differ from the goals of the organization, conflicts of interest can also arise. Managing such conflicts is particularly important for the long-term sustainability and efficiency of the organization (Barcsi et al., 2014). Inappropriately managed conflicts can destroy the workplace atmosphere and negatively affect employee engagement, while properly managed conflicts can promote innovation and organizational development (Deák, 2006). The definition of those responsible for managing conflicts and possible interventions depend on the phase of the given conflict. In order to effectively manage conflicts, it is worth providing different solution options, since members of the organization have different preferences in managing their conflicts (Czifra et al., 2024).

WORKPLACE WELL-BEING

The concept of workplace well-being is receiving increasing attention these days, as it has a significant impact not only on employee satisfaction but also on the performance of organizations. The term workplace well-being refers to employees' sense of well-being arising from work, which encompasses all work-related elements (Dajnoki et al., 2020). Job satisfaction, which is based on workplace experiences and the sense of success in work, is closely related to the quality of work, the characteristics of the work environment, and the leadership style (Page–Vella-Brodrick, 2009). Well-being at work therefore depends not only on the subjective feeling of happiness, but also on objective factors that influence the quality of life of employees (Szántó et al., 2016). The workplace environment is very decisive in developing well-being at work, therefore it is important to take this into account in the economic development of enterprises (Zsótér–Bagi, 2020) (Simonyi et al., 2013). In order to improve employee performance, the role of performance appraisal has become crucial in modern human resource management practice. The aim of this system is not only to increase employee performance, but also to achieve organizational goals (Karoliny, 2008). Due to the asymmetric nature of the employment relationship, employees are often in a vulnerable position vis-à-vis the employer,

which emphasizes the importance of labor law protection mechanisms (Szabó, 2024). The goal of labor law is to ensure collective freedom of organization and participation rights, while protecting individual rights, thus balancing the power asymmetry between employees and employers. Such legal frameworks not only help protect the economic and social interests of employees, but also contribute to increasing well-being at work (Szabó, 2024).

TEAM BUILDING

The role of team building programs in the life of modern organizations is essential, as these trainings can contribute to more effective teamwork and the creation of a positive workplace atmosphere. Getting to know each other better, role-playing games and conflict management situations all serve to help participants get to know each other better, prepare for working together and effectively manage conflicts (Deák, 2006). These tools are also suitable for improving workplace communication, which is why companies organize various team building and community programs to resolve tensions and strengthen the company's internal cohesion (Hampel et al., 2023). The condition for effective teamwork is that all members of the group clearly understand and accept the company's vision, and that roles, responsibilities and objectives are clear. Developing a vision and specifying tasks are essential for successful cooperation, and it is also important that all members are motivated to build relationships and share knowledge (Báthory Németh, 2012). Measuring the effectiveness of training and developing it based on quality criteria is essential, as they help to ensure continuous development and a harmonious workplace atmosphere (Endrődy-Nagy, 2013). Team cohesion is influenced by several factors, such as empathy, reliability, and the quality of relationships between individuals. For successful teamwork, it is important that members are able to pay attention to each other's feelings and needs, and that they are reliable when performing tasks (Gulyás–Turcsányi, 2008). These are not just fun pastimes, but targeted trainings that help strengthen relationships between employees and contribute to increasing job satisfaction (Somogyi, 2018).

Finally, employee development, especially through team building training, can have many positive consequences. Such as keeping expertise up to date, increasing motivation and satisfaction, and facilitating organizational change. All of these contribute to improving organizational performance in the long term (Karoliny, 2008).

MATERIAL AND METHOD

I chose two small (6 and 12 people) laboratory micro-communities with similar job roles, and examined their general atmosphere and attitude towards team building programs. During the questionnaire survey, I provided the following important things, which were also essential in similar surveys (Újvári et al., 2021) (Zsótér et al., 2014), which I hope helped the employees to express their honest opinions. One was the complete anonymity of the questionnaire. To this end, I used multiple-choice questions instead of open-ended questions, thus avoiding the possible recognition of handwriting (Zsótér–Tóth, 2014). In addition, I had to refrain from asking questions such as the gender and age of the respondent, which could have facilitated a more stratified evaluation of the results.

The other thing I assured the respondents of was that I would not show the individual answers to either colleagues or management, in order to avoid any possible inconvenience. Furthermore, I excluded the management of the laboratories from filling out the questionnaire.

Taking the above into account, I recorded the answers of 5 people in one laboratory and 11 in the other. Both laboratories belong to a larger parent company and monitor the quality of the company's services. In one laboratory, the beer produced by the parent company is tested, from the incoming raw materials to the finished beer. All 5 laboratory technicians working here completed the questionnaire. In the other laboratory, drinking water and wastewater provided by the local drinking and wastewater service provider are tested. There are 11 laboratory technicians working here, and they were the ones who completed the questionnaire. It is important to note that among the employees of both laboratories, there is one male laboratory technician, and the rest are women. The age distribution is similar in the two laboratories: there are younger (24–35 years old), more experienced (35–45 years old) and employees older than 45 years old.

I created a questionnaire consisting of thirteen questions, which I sent to the employees of the two laboratories in printed form. I originally prepared several questions, but I omitted those that would have inevitably

shifted the respondents' thoughts towards higher salaries. In the present research, I wanted to examine employee satisfaction from the perspective of human relations, so I had to disregard the issue of motivation.

RESULTS AND THEIR EVALUATION

First of all, I was curious about human relations within the work communities. I examined this with two questions: one deals with creating personal relationships, the other with communication during work. It can be observed that in the water lab, creating personal relationships does not cause as much difficulty as in the beer lab, where professional communication works a little more smoothly, while in the water lab it is quite "stiff".

In the beer lab, communication within the team, even within the job, works more smoothly, while in the water lab, establishing personal relationships works more smoothly. However, it is clear that there are difficulties in both areas in both labs. It is clear that most of the difficulties faced by employees in both labs stem from poor communication. This poor communication can also occur between colleagues, which can lead to minor or major conflicts. Employees may also feel inadequate communication from management, which can lead to a loss of motivation in the long run.

The results of the next question were also in line with this, where both work groups would prefer regular feedback as a solution, thus improving communication. They would also suggest other measures that could improve the working environment (such as team building or further training opportunities), and in addition, more than half of the respondents in the water lab feel that a better work-life balance is needed.

Next, I examined the preferred team building methods, which showed a significant difference between the two labs. While the employees in the beer lab preferred joint training, which favors joint development, the employees in the water lab would rather choose leisure programs. This could also be due to the higher workload. The results show that the employees of the water lab would rather choose an external location for team building after a higher workload, as opposed to the beer lab, where members are happy to stay at work for team building sessions, and would not rule out the opportunities offered by the online space.

According to the length of time allocated to team building programs, the employees of the beer lab prefer shorter programs, on the contrary, the employees of the water lab prefer multi-day, but at least half-day team building. This can be related to the excessive workload and the location of the team building, as they probably see the team building program as a relaxing excursion, which the longer the better helps to relax after working days.

It is interesting to observe that although the two labs imagine the ideal team building conditions differently, they expect the same short-term effects. The water lab also hopes for a significant reduction in conflicts between colleagues after a team building. Similar expectations were expressed as a long-term effect: both communities primarily hope for better cooperation, which is the basis for efficiency. However, while the beer lab also sees the team-building program as a skill development program to a significant extent, the water lab hopes for an improvement in the workplace atmosphere and employee satisfaction, which may result from conflicts and higher workload.

I then sought to find out what could be the cause of the more pessimistic, negative mood of the water lab employees, which is also reflected in their answers. One reason is probably excessive workload, which can cause fatigue and intolerance among each other within the community, which makes good communication impossible, and which can lead to conflicts. Conflicts within the community are clearly occurring at the water lab, while this is not so typical in the beer lab, but the smaller number of staff may also contribute to this.

Conflict management should be very important, it should be in work communities, which can also take place between employees, but management can also coordinate the resolution of personal problems. At the water lab, employees clearly feel that the management of conflicts that occur is rarer, which can be a criticism of themselves, but at the same time it can also draw attention to the shortcomings of management.

Finally, regarding management, I was curious to know how much employees feel valued in their work, as it has a great impact on their well-being and general mood. Here too, the two labs showed significant differences based on the answers to this question. While 60% of employees in the beer lab feel valued, proportionally much fewer in the water lab feel valued by management. This probably

contributes greatly to the generally negative mood of the work community.

CONCLUSIONS, SUMMARIES

The aim of my research is to examine the cohesion within work communities, human relationships, and the resulting general atmosphere between two small laboratory work communities with similar occupations. While analyzing the answers given by the laboratory technicians, it turned out that it is easier for employees to establish personal relationships in the drinking and wastewater testing laboratory, while professional communication is smoother in the beer quality control laboratory, but communication difficulties are present in both workplaces, which can be the primary causes of workplace conflicts and loss of motivation. Employees in both places emphasize the importance of regular feedback, and suggest team-building and further training opportunities to improve the general atmosphere of the work environment.

I experienced a surprising difference in the ideas about team building programs in the two labs. Several differences emerged during the analysis of the responses regarding the type, location, and duration of the programs. In the beer quality control lab, employees prefer joint training, while the employees of the drinking and wastewater testing lab prefer longer-term, outdoor leisure programs. This, that is, the lab workers prefer team building that is as far away from the work environment in space and time as possible, may have developed due to the negative atmosphere in the workplace and excessive workload, thereby consciously or unconsciously trying to keep problems away from themselves.

Both laboratories expect similar short- and long-term effects from team building, such as improved communication, better cooperation and efficiency, but while the beer quality control laboratory also hopes for skill development, the drinking and wastewater testing laboratory is more confident in improving the atmosphere and satisfaction at work. The negative atmosphere can be explained by conflicts arising from excessive workload and poor communication. According to the employees, the management resolves conflicts less often than it should, and fewer people feel valued than in the beer quality control laboratory, which also contributes to the more negative atmosphere.

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