

Improving Work Ethics for Organizational Performance in Zimbabwe Local Authorities

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ABSTRACT

When employees become dissatisfied at an organization, they may develop unethical behaviors like absenteeism, misuse of company resources, unprofessionalism, moonlighting, theft and accepting bribes that impede service delivery and organizational performance. The main thrust of the research was improving work ethics for organizational performance in Zimbabwe local authorities. The paper found that work ethics is the accepted principles of right or wrong that govern the conduct of a person, the members of a profession, or actions of an organization. Work ethics include professionalism, team work, honesty as well as social responsibility. The paper revealed positive effects of improving work ethics on organizational performance which include among others enhances employee morale, motivation and commitment as employees are happy to secure jobs as well as seeing the fruits of ethical behaviors.

Keywords: Work ethics; Organizational performance; Local authorities; Service delivery

INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary environment, unethical practices have become the order of the day thereby causing public grumbles, unsatisfactory customer care services, poor service delivery as well as organizations losing valid customers and many valuable assets. Despite a notable positive attitude towards ending unethical practices in local authorities, the paper reveals a worrying increase in unethical practices including nepotism in recruitment, corruption in procurement, fraud among other related elements. The article presents work ethics concept, strategies to improve work ethics, benefits of good work ethics, challenges faced in managing work ethics as well as recommendations on what local authorities can do in promoting good work ethics [1].

LITERATURE REVIEW

Work ethics concept

The origin of the word ethics is Greek “ethos”, signifying character. Ethics is a conception of right and wrong behavior. It is also viewed as a science of morals in human conduct, it is that

branch of philosophy which is concerned with the study of the conduct and character of people. Workplace ethics can be described as a set of values, which include the right attitude, correct behavior, respect for others and effective communication in the workplace [2]. It is therefore the conviction that one should work industriously, beyond minimum expectations, striving for excellence in every aspect of the labor. Several analysts attempted to recognize the value of work place ethics on employee performance and that of the organization. Work place ethics are also capable of manipulating individuals to commit or not to commit crimes within the organization. Work place ethics are not limited to honesty, respects for others, fairness and objectivity [3].

Strategies to improve work ethics

Work ethics are a chief concern for organizations as unethical behaviors has negative impacts on clientele, shareholders, employees, and the overall organization. There is need for local authorities to adopt strategies to improve work ethics. The following are some of the strategies local authorities can adopt to improve work ethics [4].

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Human resources policies: Human resources policies are ongoing guides on how to manage people in an organization. They define the philosophies and values of how the organization treats people and from them derive the principles that managers should follow when handling personnel matters. Human resource policies must be separated from procedures. A policy provides general guidance on how to deal with human resource problems and the procedure clarifies precisely what steps need to be taken to deal with major employment issues, such as complaints, discipline, competition, and layoffs. These policies act as reference points in case of unethical conducts and are also rooted on shared standards, tenets and beliefs in treating employees [5]. There is need for HRM to mediate in work ethics management through policies like recruitment and selection, health and safety, reward, diversity management and many more.

Strategic planning: Strategic planning is a process whereby an organization makes choices about the following issues, including making choices about why it exists, what its major goals are and what resources it needs for a successful future. It helps management understand its current situation and in turn allows it to plan for the future. It is important also for local authorities to invest in improving work ethics because of the changing and expressively cumulative demands for change programs, services and greater demands for responsibility and good governance [6]. Strategic planning is a disciplined effort therefore it is important to make decisions and actions that shape and guide organizations. There is need for the creation of effective and results-oriented organizations which are required in linking the strategic plan and annual performance. Strategic planning fosters training, evaluation programs, briefings, and feedback as well as awareness campaigns which helps organizations in improving work ethics [7].

Training and development: Employees should be trained and developed on why, how as well as the benefits of work ethics. Some employees are seen as confused and they are not able to distinguish the difference between right and wrong. Training has a purpose of effecting positive and permanent change in knowledge, skills and attitude for improved performance of employees in an organization. Training determines the behaviours and performance of employees in the working environment. Training and development programs are critical to the improvement of employee performance as well as overall organizational performance [8]. These programs has far reaching benefits for organizations which include improved work performance, increased productivity, a decrease in wastages, less accidents, decrease in labour turnover and decrease in absenteeism. Training is effective if there is congruence on the values of the organization and the values of the training with the goal of achieving the training needs. An ongoing training and development process facilitates change and improvement in work ethics for organizational performance [9]. Ethics training is a must for local authorities that are taking an ethical medication route to resolve the problem of unethical practices. It provides employees with the opportunity to understand and apply the organizational code of ethics and to practically learn the competencies to resolve work-related ethical dilemmas.

Benefits of good work ethics

Retention of talented workforce: Employees tend to like being associated with organizations which have a good code of ethics, thus they would stay longer in the organization. This would reduce labor turnover and costs of recruitment. Employees are better motivated and become more productive when they are associated with organizations that value strong work ethics. An effective means for making the performance of an organization better is by putting more emphasis on practices of work ethics in particular, by using different approaches that creates an ethical culture among the employees. Regardless of the economic hardships, some local authorities are managing to pay their employees on time as well as giving them attractive wages. This ethical behavior is attracting and retaining good employees. Competent employees want career advancement opportunities and attractive remuneration especially on the quality of the work they do, thus organizations with such ethical standards have managed to attract and retain talented workforce [10].

Gaining and maintaining organizational performance: Performance management is a continuous process used to identify, measure, and develop individual and team performance, and to align performance with the organization's strategic goals. Performance is defined as the act of achieving results. Performance management is the process of ensuring that a set of inputs and time invested in achieving a desired level of performance meets individual or collective goals. Organizations benefit from improved work ethics as organizational performance is rooted on human factor of production. Investing in management of work ethics within organizations is credited in promoting a positive organizational reputation as well as retention of skilled and knowledge workers considering the fact those employees are important in the adaptability and organizational performance.

Builds stakeholder loyalty: Local authorities benefits stakeholder loyalty through improved work ethics. Building stakeholder loyalty gives organizations the value it deserves. Loyal stakeholders and consumers of services always call for service more regularly and they will frequently recommend your organization to others. Good organizational ethics create a good brand for your organization [11].

Challenges faced in managing work ethics

Organizations are faced by numerous challenges in managing work ethics. The following are key challenges faced by various organizations in managing work ethics.

Resistance: Resistance to transformation is a challenge faced in improving work ethics. Human beings have a tendency of resisting change regardless of change demonstrating development or growth. Generally, the cause of resistance include anxiety on how the employees will be affected by change, fear of unknown, job performance and failure of management to honor commitments. Resistance to change may take several forms and it is very difficult to pinpoint to the exact reason for resistance to change. Management should expect resistance when planning to improve and implement work ethics. Resistance can slow down the speed with which innovation

might otherwise proceed. Resistance to change has negative effects like increased absenteeism, increased employee impatience, frustration, and sabotage. It can be a barrier in improving work ethics thus local authorities should consider that and have strategies in place like training to avoid resistance from employees.

The challenged role of the HRM profession: The challenged role of the HRM occupation is a stumbling block to the improvement of work ethics for enhanced organizational performance. HRM specialists act as employee promoters keen to achieve a mutual employment relationship. They are strategic business partners who design and influence business strategy and deliver HR bundles to ensure organizational efficiency. Indeed, HRM specialists are the custodians of employees [8]. However, many organizations especially in Zimbabwe consider the HRM professionals as second class citizens, who are victims of change. HRM professionals in many organizations are not involved in strategy development but considered executors of change. Employees concerns are totally off the scope of discussions since HRM is not at the strategic table but on the table of change management. This devaluation is destroying employees' faith in the organizations hence unethical behaviors like nepotism and unprofessionalism manifest drastically thereby directly affecting organizational performance.

Financial constrains: Financial constraints are another limiting factor in improving work ethics. Local authorities usually do not have the financial capacity to initiate ethics trainings. Some of the organizations have a little budget for the HR department that is usually in charge of ethics training. These organizations suffer from monetary crisis to promote training and development of employees as funds are channeled to other issues like salaries, health and safety and the refurbishment of offices. Research has shown that organizations do not value to budget funds for ethics trainings [12].

Poor communication: Communication is regarded as the lifeblood of each and every organization. Poor communication is a disturbing factor in improving work ethics in many organizations. The channels of communication in many organizations are not proper and most organizations fail because they don't value effective communication channels. Communication is not valued in many local authorities and is taken for granted due to the tendencies of dictatorships. Ineffective communication between employees and managers is evident in organizations as managers seem to ignore employees concerns, requests or queries. This defeats the purpose of openness and honesty from the top to the bottom line of management.

Recommendations

- The organization through the HRM department should invest in ethics training programs.
- Management should include workers when making major decisions especially the ones that affect employees.
- Organizations need to strengthen their policies.
- Organization should promote ethical leadership at workplace by introducing workplace ethics renewal teams.

CONCLUSION

In the light of the above discussions it is important to conclude that strong workplace ethics of honest, respect among employees, fairness and social responsibility are keys in organizational performance. The paper discusses issues around work ethics concept, strategies to improve work ethics, benefits of good work ethics, challenges faced in managing work ethics as well as recommendations on what organizations can do in promoting good work ethics.

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