
MONITORING AND EMPLOYEE MORALE OF PRINTING FIRMS IN RIVERS STATE NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT: *Excessive monitoring, lack of delegation and the lack of job autonomy in Rivers State Printing Firms is an area of great interest and concern. The high level of employee suspicion affects employee morale and performance. The objectives of this study were to assess the influence of monitoring on employee morale, to ascertain how lack of delegation influences employee morale, to find out how lack of job autonomy affects employee morale, and to find out the influence of work environment on micromanagement and employee morale. The study employed the cross sectional survey design where information was solicited mainly through the use of self-administered questionnaires. Respondents for the self-administered questionnaires were picked from a population of 135 employees of 5 selected Printing firms in Rivers State. The study sample was 101 obtained using the Taro Yamane sample size determination formula. Data was analyzed and results presented using tables, mean and standard deviation. The hypotheses were tested using the Spearman's Rank Order Correlation Coefficient. The study found out that there is a strong negative relationship between monitoring and employee morale of printing firms in Rivers State. The study recommends that management of print media should create an organizational environment that is open to innovation and new ideas. Employees should be empowered with decision making authority so that they could take risks.*

Key words: *Monitoring, Delegation, Employees, Morale, employee Turnover.*

INTRODUCTION

Monitoring is the ability of superiors to influence the behavior of subordinates to take a particular course of action (Bernard, 2005). It is the art of influencing people towards achieving organizational goals. Bernard (2005) further clarifies that quality of supervision therefore refers to the effectiveness of the superiors in influencing the behavior of the subordinates in taking a particular course of action. Managers use their positions to

influence the behavior, actions of subordinates to take a particular course of action (Bernard, 2005). In some cases however managers have conflicting interests with those of the organization and such managers are usually autocratic and rarely consider employee interests hence registering low performances from their subordinates.

Monitoring is a micromanagement style, micromanagement can be defined as a situation where the manager closely observes and controls the work of employees. Micromanagement, as found out in Sidhu (2012) is management based on excessive control or attention to irrelevant details. The online Encarta dictionary defines micromanagement as paying attention to small details in management, control of a person or a situation by paying unnecessary attention to minor details. Micromanagement generally has a negative connotation that is according to Bielaszka (2008), micromanagement has all the traits of an autocratic manager who retains as much power and decision making authority as possible. The employees are not consulted before decisions that affect them are made and therefore have little or no contribution; orders must be obeyed without receiving any form of explanation, and, there are a structured set of rewards and punishments.

The bothersome boss who second guesses every decision a subordinate makes, frets about the font size of the latest progress report, or inspects all of his employees emails not only frustrates and demoralizes his harassed workers but seriously damages the productivity of the organization and, over the long run, may jeopardize the organization's survival. Unfortunately, micromanagement is a fact of management life. Why do so many employees hate to be micromanaged, yet so many managers continue to do it? Why have we all worked for micromanagers but have never been one ourselves? But have we? Maybe the noted management consultant had it right when he quipped, "We have met the enemy...and he is us.

Micromanagement now commonly refers to the control of an enterprise in every particular and to the smallest detail, with the effect of obstructing progress and neglecting broader, higher level policy issues. Micromanagement has been practiced and recognized well before we labeled it as an organizational pathology. In 1946, Peter Drucker called for a "democracy of management" whereby organizations need to decentralize and delegate more decision-making authority to employees'.

In 1960, Douglas McGregor described a Theory X manager as one possessing many of the characteristics of the modern micromanager, one who is poor at proper delegating but one who believes he delegates well. While micromanagement has always disrupted organizational life, it only recently has entered the workplace vocabulary, with the first mention of the term appearing in 1975 in an article in the Economist. Since then, increasing concern has been focused on the impact of worthless bosses.

Extreme micromanagers behave pathologically, refused to accept personal responsibility or accountability and create scapegoats to blame for their own mistakes. They seldom develop people but instead exploit them, preferring to control results rather than inspiring creativity. Being afraid of competition, they rarely hire employees with the talent, experience, and know-how to challenge them. Micromanagers tend to dumb down their organizations. As they hire drones, they must work even harder because drones take more work to manage than do thinking, industrious workers. Generally, this study is aimed at investigating the influence of monitoring on employees' morale in printing firms in Rivers State. Specifically, the study seeks to determine the influence of monitoring on employees' morale of printing firms in Rivers State.

CONCEPTUAL REVIEW

Monitoring

Employers and superior can create very difficult problems within the workforce when they monitor employees'. That being said, the following questions require urgent answers, should employers be monitoring their employees'? If so, what should they be restricted to monitoring, and do the employees' have the right to know that employers are monitoring them. Each of these questions produces millions of different response from both the employer's side, as well as the viewpoint of the employees'.

Frayer (2002) noted that, the increased use of the Internet by employees' has created more avenues for employers to produce sophisticated monitoring software, which enables them to continuously peer into literally everything employees' do online both during and after work hours. Frayer however stated that, organization created employees' monitoring because there was a substantial need for organizations to monitor their workforce. Which in my opinion I totally agree with Frayer, but as much as employers should monitor its workforce, it should be minimal in order not to send the wrong messages to employees', thereby destroying their morale.

Glassdoor.com posited that, there are lots of potential pitfalls involved in employees' monitoring. Depending on the employees and the monitoring methods, workplace surveillance can encourage fear and distrust in the workplace. Overbearing surveillance and constant negative feedback can discourage employees and turn them against each other, increasing turnover and lowering morale and ultimately workplace productivity. Constant monitoring processes can also keep employees from their work. What may be classified as a distraction could very well be a useful tool for the employee's job, for example. Many employees' simply don't like to be monitored when they are working. It distracts them from the task at hand. Bandura (2002) sees monitoring mechanisms as a means of disengagement, a way of spreading the role of an agent and thus facilitating harmful managerial behavior which effectively crushes employees' morale.

Employees' Morale

Employees' morale is generally referred to as "willingness to work". Job satisfaction and dissatisfaction create the problem of low morale among the employees'. Good motivation leads to high morale. It being a psychological concept, it is not easy to define it precisely. According to Robert and John (2003) employees' morale is the extent to which employees' need are satisfied and the extent to which an employee perceives that satisfaction stemming from total job satisfaction. According to this approach, the satisfaction of basic needs is the symbols of morale. If the basic needs of the employees are satisfied their morale will be high and also their morale will be low when they are not satisfied with the higher leaders.

Dimensions of Employee Morale

Low Employees' Morale

Sauermann and Cohen, (2008) defined morale as an eluding quality which entails human feelings, emotions, attitude and perception towards the organization and its members. Positive morale is usually characterized by traits such as; discipline, confidence and willingness to perform. Low morale on the other hand, can be attributed to varied prevailing factors such as job insecurity, lack of fair compensation policy, uncertain business conditions, poor leadership style, lack of delegation of duties, respect and appreciation of employees and excessive outsourcing practices. Low morale has a massive negative effect

on organization's income, productivity, financial competitiveness and organizational objectives.

Low morale according to Sauermann and Cohen, (2008) is a consequence of managerial behavior where superiors and organizational heads controls their employees from a top-down command without any form of direct conversation on workplace issues bedeviling the organization and its employees, according to them. Low morale also causes employees to lose interest, especially when managers don't appreciate their efforts and the tasks performed and this happen because of the poor management style adopted by the organization in which superiors exercise excessive and unnecessary control on the employees, where workers are treated as being incompetent to perform certain organizational duties as a result, the manager is constantly breathing on their necks (Zeynep & Huckman, 2008).

Owing to excessive control from managers, employees become jaded and tired of being mistrusted leading to a lack of creativity, innovation and finally a loss of interest in the entire firm as a result of low morale, all thanks to micromanagement.

According to an article in The Leading Edge by Abbot, (2003) unhappy employees who are discontented with the managerial misbehavior can have a high price tag. Management should therefore work on controlling the effects of low morale through the understanding of their employees' potentials by giving them the necessary freedom while they work and their core work processes, understanding their abilities, enriching employees' job and recognizing their achievements, respecting and appreciating the inputs from employees Ngambi, (2011).

Employees Turnover

Rankin (2006) asserted that the rate of turnover ranges from organization to organization. The levels of turnover also vary from region to region. High level of employee turnover can be very costly to any firm especially when top talents leave an organization it has a devastating effect on the functionality of such firms considering the fact that some of the best hands have moved on.

The remote causes of employee turnover ranges from the following; unhappiness with leadership style, unhappiness from being micromanaged, Feelings of not being appreciated since employees ordinarily wants to give their all on the job, they also want to be appreciated and respected for their efforts. Even the most experienced of workers needs to be told what they are doing right once in a while.

A firm that employs micromanagement as its way of managing employees, will only achieve few short term goals but with time the obsessed superior that is always looking out for unnecessary details, monitoring and controlling every organizational member will only succeed in creating a frustrated, unmotivated, non-creative workforce that will eventually lead to low morale and high employee turnover, because employees wants to work under a manager that respects and value their view point, after all, the employees require freedom without meddling while they carry out the task from decision made by management, so why not give the employees an opportunity to contribute to the decisions that affects their work.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted the descriptive survey design, because it assessed the influence of micromanagement on employees' morale. The design is considered suitable because it allows for the descriptive examination of the variables across several units in a convenient way (Baridam, 2001). The population comprised of 135 registered Printing Firms in Rivers

State. The sample of the study consisted of 101 respondents that were randomly drawn through simple random sampling technique. A 24 items questionnaire based on micromanagement was developed by the researchers. The instrument was validated by three experts from the faculty of management in Rivers State University, Port Harcourt. The questionnaire items were structured using 5-point Likert scale and each response was given a corresponding nominal value Strongly Disagree (SD); 1, Disagree (D); 2, undecided (U), 0, Agree (A); 3 and Strongly Agree (SA); 4. The hypotheses were tested using the Spearman Rank Order Coefficient with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Bivariate Analysis

Table 1 Correlation Matrix for Monitoring and Measures of Employees' Morale

			Monitoring	Low morale	Employee turnover
Spearman's rho	Monitoring	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	-.842**	-.797**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000	.000
		N	88	88	88
	Low morale	Correlation Coefficient	-.842**	1.000	-.608**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.	.000
		N	88	88	88
	High employee turnover	Correlation Coefficient	-.797**	-.608**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.
		N	88	88	88

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Ho₁: There is no significant relationship between monitoring and low morale of employees' in printing firms in Rivers State.

From the result in the table above, the correlation coefficient (rho) shows that there is a significant and negative relationship between monitoring and low morale of employees'. The rho value -0.842 confirms this relationship and it is significant at $p < 0.000 < 0.01$. The correlation coefficient represents a very high negative correlation indicating also a very strong negative relationship among the variables. Therefore, based on empirical findings the null hypothesis earlier stated is hereby rejected and the alternate upheld. Thus, there is a significant relationship between monitoring and low morale of employees' in the print media of Rivers State.

Ho₂: There is no significant relationship between monitoring and employee turnover of employees' in printing firms in Rivers State.

From the result in the table above, the correlation coefficient (rho) shows that there is a significant and negative relationship between monitoring and high turnover of employees'. The rho value -0.797 confirms this relationship and it is significant at $p < 0.000 < 0.01$. The correlation coefficient represents a high negative correlation indicating also a strong negative relationship among the variables. Therefore, based on empirical

findings the null hypothesis earlier stated is hereby rejected and the alternate upheld. Thus, there is a significant relationship between monitoring and high turnover of employees' in the print media of Rivers State.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The relationship between Monitoring and Employees' Morale

The test of hypotheses one and two (Table 1), shows that there is a strong negative relationship between monitoring and each of the measures of employees' morale. This implies that the monitoring methods, workplace surveillance can encourage fear and distrust in the workplace. Overbearing surveillance and constant negative feedback can discourage employees and turn them against each other, increasing turnover and lowering morale and ultimately workplace productivity. This finding is in tandem with Bandura (2002) who argued that monitoring mechanisms as a means of disengagement, a way of spreading the role of an agent and thus facilitating harmful managerial behavior which effectively crushes employees' morale.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study examined the relationship between monitoring and employees' morale of print media in Rivers State. Accordingly, the study strategy and methodology were designed in a way that points towards the achievement of the study objectives. The study concludes that monitoring strategy negatively impacts employees' morale indicated through low morale and a high turnover rate.

Based on the above conclusion the study recommends that management of print media should create an organizational environment that is open to innovation and new ideas. Employees should be empowered with decision making authority so that they could take risks.

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