Axis 7: Organization theories : Behavioral theory

Introduction :

The behavioral theory of organization focuses on understanding and managing human behavior within an organizational context. It emphasizes the importance of individuals and their interactions, suggesting that employee satisfaction, motivation, and group dynamics significantly impact organizational effectiveness. Notable contributors to this theory include Douglas McGregor, who proposed Theory X and Theory Y, highlighting different assumptions about employee motivation and management styles.

The behavioral theory of organization is an approach that examines and interprets how individuals and groups within an organization behave. It emphasizes the influence of human behavior on organizational performance, considering factors such as motivation, communication, leadership, and group dynamics in shaping the overall effectiveness of an organization.

1- Theory of Human Relations

The Human Relations Theory is a school of thought that emerged in the 1930s, emphasizing the importance of social and psychological factors in the workplace. Elton Mayo and his colleagues conducted the Hawthorne studies, which played a crucial role in the development of this theory. It posits that employee satisfaction, social needs, and interpersonal relationships significantly impact productivity. The theory highlights the importance of understanding and addressing the human aspect of work to enhance organizational performance.

 George Elton Mayo is often associated with the Hawthorne studies, a series of experiments conducted at the Western Electric Hawthorne Works in Chicago during the 1920s and 1930s. Mayo's findings contributed to the Human Relations Movement in management theory.

The Hawthorne studies explored the impact of various factors, such as lighting conditions and work hours, on worker productivity. However, the researchers found that changes in lighting had little effect, but otherwise, they noted that productivity increased consistently regardless of experimental changes. Mayo found that social and psychological factors played a significant role in influencing productivity. The presence of attention and recognition from supervisors, as well as the sense of being part of a group, were found to enhance employee morale and performance.

Mayo's work emphasized the importance of considering human factors in the workplace and recognizing the social and psychological needs of employees. His findings had a lasting impact on management practices, leading to a greater emphasis on employee welfare, teamwork, and the socio-psychological aspects of work. For example, increased attention from supervisors and a sense of appreciation played a crucial role in influencing workers' behavior and productivity. Hawthorne's studies have become the cornerstone of human relationship theory, highlighting the importance of interpersonal relationships, communication, and social aspects in the workplace.

One of the pioneers of this theory is also the thinker Douglas McGregor, the author of the theory of X and A. Where, he developed Theory X and Theory Y, contrasting perspectives on employee motivation and management styles.

Theory X: Assumes that employees inherently dislike work, prefer to avoid responsibility, have little ambition, and primarily seek security. It implies that strict supervision and external control are necessary to motivate employees.

Theory Y: Posits that work can be as natural as play and rest. Employees can be self-motivated, enjoy responsibility, and seek challenges. This theory suggests that a participative management style, involving employees in decision-making, can lead to better motivation and performance.

These theories highlight different assumptions about human nature and guide managerial attitudes and approaches toward employee engagement and motivation.

Another thinker named Rudolf Stanner. He is the author of the theory of motivation. He believes that motivation is an internal effect on a person that drives and activates behavior and then directs that behavior towards achieving human goals. So, the term "motivation theory" is broad and encompasses various perspectives on what drives and influences human behavior. One prominent motivation theory is Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, proposed by Abraham Maslow. It suggests that individuals are motivated by a hierarchy of needs, starting with basic physiological needs and progressing to higher-level needs like self-actualization.

Another influential theory is Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, which identifies factors that contribute to job satisfaction (motivator factors) and dissatisfaction (hygiene factors) in the workplace.

Additionally, there's Vroom's Expectancy Theory, proposing that individuals are motivated to act in a certain way based on their expectations of the outcome and the perceived value of that outcome.

Understanding the context or specific aspect of motivation you're interested in can help tailor the discussion to a particular theory or set of theories.

2- Theory of Administrative Philosophy

Administrative philosophy is not typically considered a distinct theory within organizational or management studies. However, administrative philosophy is often associated with the broader field of administrative theory, which encompasses various perspectives on how organizations should be structured and managed.

One notable figure in administrative theory is Henri Fayol, who proposed the "14 Principles of Management." These principles include concepts like unity of command, division of work, and scalar chain, providing guidelines for effective organizational administration.

An example related to the administrative philosophy can be seen in Henri Fayol's principle of "Unity of Command." This principle suggests that each employee should receive orders from only one superior to avoid confusion and conflict.

In a practical context, imagine a project team where members report to multiple supervisors. If there's a lack of unity of command, with conflicting directives coming from different leaders, it can lead to confusion, inefficiency, and potential conflicts among team members. Adhering to Fayol's principle helps maintain a clear chain of command, facilitating smoother communication and coordination within the organization.

3- Decision Theory and Organizational Balance

Decision theory in organizational context involves analyzing and making choices based on rational decision-making processes. It considers factors like risk, uncertainty, and potential outcomes to arrive at optimal decisions.

Organizational balance, on the other hand, refers to maintaining equilibrium or stability within an organization. This can involve balancing competing interests, resources, and priorities to achieve overall effectiveness.

In the context of decision theory and organizational balance, an example might be a company deciding whether to invest in a new technology. Decision theory would involve assessing the potential risks and rewards associated with the investment. Organizational balance would come into play in ensuring that the decision aligns with the company's overall strategic goals, balances financial considerations, and takes into account the impact on existing resources and structures.

In summary, decision theory guides the decision-making process, while organizational balance ensures that decisions align with the broader equilibrium and objectives of the organization.

To clarify more, consider a company deciding whether to adopt a new, innovative technology that could significantly enhance productivity but involves a substantial upfront cost. In this scenario:

1. **Decision Theory Aspect:**

   - The decision-makers would apply decision theory by assessing the potential risks and benefits.

   - They might conduct a cost-benefit analysis, considering factors such as the initial investment, expected returns, and potential uncertainties in technology adoption.

2. **Organizational Balance Aspect:**

   - Organizational balance comes into play as decision-makers need to align the technology adoption with the company's overall strategic goals.

   - Balancing financial considerations, the company must ensure that investing in the technology doesn't jeopardize existing operations or strain resources beyond sustainable levels.

   - It involves considering the impact on employee roles, training needs, and the overall organizational structure to maintain equilibrium.

In this way, decision theory guides the analytical aspects of the choice, while organizational balance ensures that the decision harmonizes with the broader organizational context.

4- Motivation Theory and needs (Details)

Motivation theories explore the factors that drive human behavior, and many of these theories are closely tied to the concept of needs. One prominent theory that connects motivation and needs is Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs.

4-1- Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs:

Maslow proposed that individuals are motivated by a hierarchical set of needs, arranged in a pyramid:

Physiological Needs: Basic necessities like food, water, and shelter.

Safety Needs: Security, stability, and protection from harm.

Social Needs: Belongingness, love, and interpersonal relationships.

Esteem Needs: Recognition, status, and self-respect.

Self-Actualization: Fulfilling one's potential and achieving personal growth.

4-2- Example:

Consider an employee motivated by Maslow's hierarchy. If their basic physiological needs (like a decent salary) are met, they may then seek safety in their job. As they establish job security, social needs become important, such as positive relationships with colleagues. Recognition for their contributions addresses esteem needs. Finally, self-actualization might involve pursuing challenging projects or professional development.

Understanding and aligning motivational strategies with employees' needs can contribute to a more engaged and satisfied workforce.

In the end, we can conclude that behavioral theory has its merits, such as providing a systematic framework for understanding and modifying behavior. It emphasizes observable actions, making it measurable and practical for interventions. However, it oversimplifies complex human behavior, neglecting cognitive aspects. Additionally, it may not address underlying causes, focusing solely on surface-level changes.