

Organisational Beliefs, Attitudes, and Value Systems During and Post-Covid Pandemic

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Executive Summary

The aim of this report is to explore how the ongoing pandemic has impacted the effectiveness of organisational beliefs, attitudes, and value systems in enhancing workplace behaviour and aspects such as decision making, strategic thinking, creativity, and organizational structure. Although values, beliefs, and attitudes are related as they all collectively affect the workforce character, personality, perceptions, and behaviours, there is a distinctive difference between them. Tesco Plc, in line with its values towards the employees, has been striving to ensure the safety and well-being of the workers while at the same time maintaining business continuity. This strategy has had critical financial implications because the company has been forced to embrace costly policies requiring the provision of paid sick leaves to all employees with Covid-19 symptoms and ensuring that every employee has personal protective equipment. To enhance Tesco organization continuity through the pandemic, some of the critical thinking models and management theories that the management requires to apply to include the Red Model, De Bono's six thinking hats model, McGregor's Theory X and Y, and Benner's Novice to Expert theory.

Introduction

The ongoing Covid-19 pandemic and the large-scale economic and social shock associated with the crises have had tremendous and swift effects on the contemporary workplaces. The global lockdown, travel ban, and social distancing measures that have been implemented across different regions in the world have upended assumptions about the nature of work and corporate interactions (Spicer 2020, p.1737). Well-known symbols of organizational life such as regular physical meetings and open plan offices filled with employees wearing suits have been replaced by virtual conferencing screens and few employees wearing personal protective equipment. Rituals such as break rooms and chat sessions have been replaced by zoom calls. The underlying organization beliefs, attitudes, and values seem to have shifted from exploration and creativity towards resilience and safety (Spicer 2020, p.1737). These workplace shifts beg a wide range of questions, including those surrounding possible changes in workplace behavior. Could the Covid-19 pandemic weaken an organization's culture? Will organization beliefs, attitudes, and value systems take a hit because people can't meet in person, making it harder to solidify these belief systems? Are employees today less able to use these systems as a roadmap in making decisions during the increased uncertainty in the tumultuous time? How can organizations continue to build and leverage their belief and values while they continue operating mostly remotely?

Report objective

The aim of this report is to explore how the ongoing pandemic has impacted the effectiveness of organisational beliefs, attitudes, and value systems in enhancing workplace behaviour and aspects such as decision making, strategic thinking, creativity, and organizational structure. To achieve this objective, the study will draw from the wide range of

literature on organization beliefs, attitudes, and values, organization culture and management theories, as well as a case study on Tesco Plc, one of the leading grocery and general merchandise in the country. The report will culminate in a prognosis on how companies such as Tesco Plc can tailor workplace changes during and post the pandemic to tackle the challenges they are currently facing and create more resilient businesses in the future.

Organization Overview

With outlets across Europe, USA, and Asia, Tesco PLC is one of the largest grocery retailers in the world. The British company was founded by Jack Cohen in 1919, starting a single grocery stall in the East End of London but has since then expanded into a multinational company through a series of mergers, acquisition of stores and retail services, and adapting to the customers' needs and preferences (Dawson et al. 2006, 182). Today, the company sells groceries, consumer electronics, homeware, consumables, beauty products, and more from 3,400 physical and virtual stores. Tesco's business model revolves around acquiring strategically located stores from weaker competitors, self-producing, online shopping, and diversification. The company's mission statement is to "make what matters better, together" (Clarke 2013, p.4). To this end, the firm has created an environment where everyone can achieve their potential to effectively contribute to the corporate growth objective.

In its 2020/2021 fiscal year, Tesco reported annual revenue of £53 billion in the UK and the Republic of Ireland, which was an increase of more than one billion pounds compared to the previous financial year (Blázquez 2021, p.1). The high revenue is reflected by the company's dominance in the UK retail industry, as shown in figure 1. However, the company's profit and return on investment (ROI) in the UK decreased in the fiscal year, an

aspect that has been widely attributed to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. Like other companies in the retail industry, Tesco was forced to close stalls that were deemed non-essential and spend more on its workforce and operating stores to ensure the safety of its employees and customers.

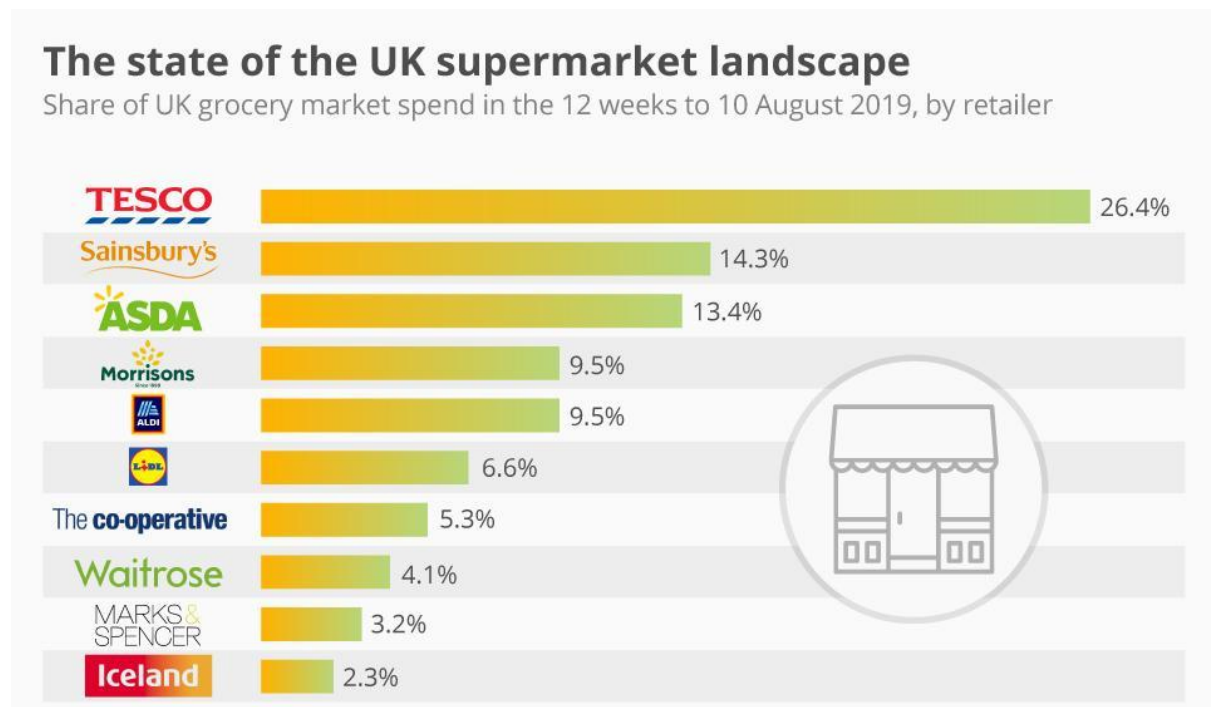


Figure 1: Tesco Market Share

Critical thinking during the pandemic

After the UK government issued measures such as lockdown, closure of institutions, and curfew with the aim of containing the pandemic, essential businesses handling food and daily necessities received a business continuity request by the government. As a result, Tesco had to critically think on how to ensure operational continuity in stores handling necessities, including supermarkets, convenience stores, and supermarkets drug stores amidst the deadly pandemic. A wide range of scholars, including Cottrell (2017), have defined critical thinking as the ability to objectively analyse information and data around a phenomenon and make

reasonable judgments. Critical thinking is important because it enables individuals and teams to effectively diagnose the issue at hand and identify a possible solution that may not be obvious at first. As noted Chronopoulos et al. (2020), during the initial phase of the pandemic, consumers waited in long lines at these stores with the aim of buying as many products as possible to sustain them through the lockdown, and many of the products, including toiletries, were quickly sold out. To adapt to these changes, Tesco changed the opening hours in some stores so that they could serve the customers at the most ideal periods. For instance, some stores were opened for 24hrs with the aim of reducing congestion and ensuring the safety of the consumers and the employees. Besides, the company doubled the number of grocery home shopping slots available and offered priority slots for vulnerable customers amidst the heightened products demand (Tesco 2021, p.1). Tesco also implemented a one-in, one-out system across its stores and continued to limit the number of people in a shop at a time with the aim of ensuring everyone's safety. A traffic light system was erected at store entrances in large and busy shops such as the Express stores so that the customers would know when they were safer to enter. Similarly, there have been signage in-store to help the customers ensure social distancing, and where possible, the company has created separate entrances and exits at stores. During the first wave of the pandemic, Tesco hired 50,000 temporary colleagues to help serve customers in the face of increased demands, and 16,000 new permanent roles were created to support the growth in online shopping (Tesco2021, p.1). The company also decided that employees who are symptomatic or test positive for the Covid-19 virus would receive a paid sick leave.

Beliefs, Attitudes, And Values

As noted by Alvesson (2012), every organization has its unique personality, just like people do. This personality, which is sometimes invisible but a powerful force, influences values, assumptions, beliefs, and attitudes that govern how people behave. These elements, which make up the organisation culture, tend to emerge over time, shaped by an organization's mission, leadership, and actions that have contributed to earlier success. However, Alvesson (2012) notes that although organization culture emerges naturally in most organizations, strong beliefs, attitudes, and values often begin with a process of "value blueprinting," which entails a candid conversation among business leaders. Once the organization's philosophy has been framed, it is implemented throughout the organization's processes, including recruitment, on-boarding, and reward and recognition programs.

Usó-Doménech and Nescolarde-Selva (2016) describe beliefs as ideas or convictions based on past experience and generally accepted to be true without actual proof or evidence. An organization's belief system embodies the cooperate's ideologies, values, morals, culture, and myths. While these convictions are often invisible to those who hold them, they shape organization practice, determine what skills and capabilities people develop, and guide how people do things based on organizational ideologies (Usó-Doménech and Nescolarde-Selva 2016, p.147). Organization belief systems serve as a frame of reference through which the workforce interprets their work, the organization processes, and the world.

On the other hand, attitudes are described as the hypothetical way in which people respond to their environment, either positively or negatively. Employees' attitudes are critical because they impact how they perceive their work, handle consumers, and interact with one another at the workplace (Jensen and Luthans 2006, p.650). Having a positive attitude allows employees to handle different situations at workplace and take better decisions objectively. It

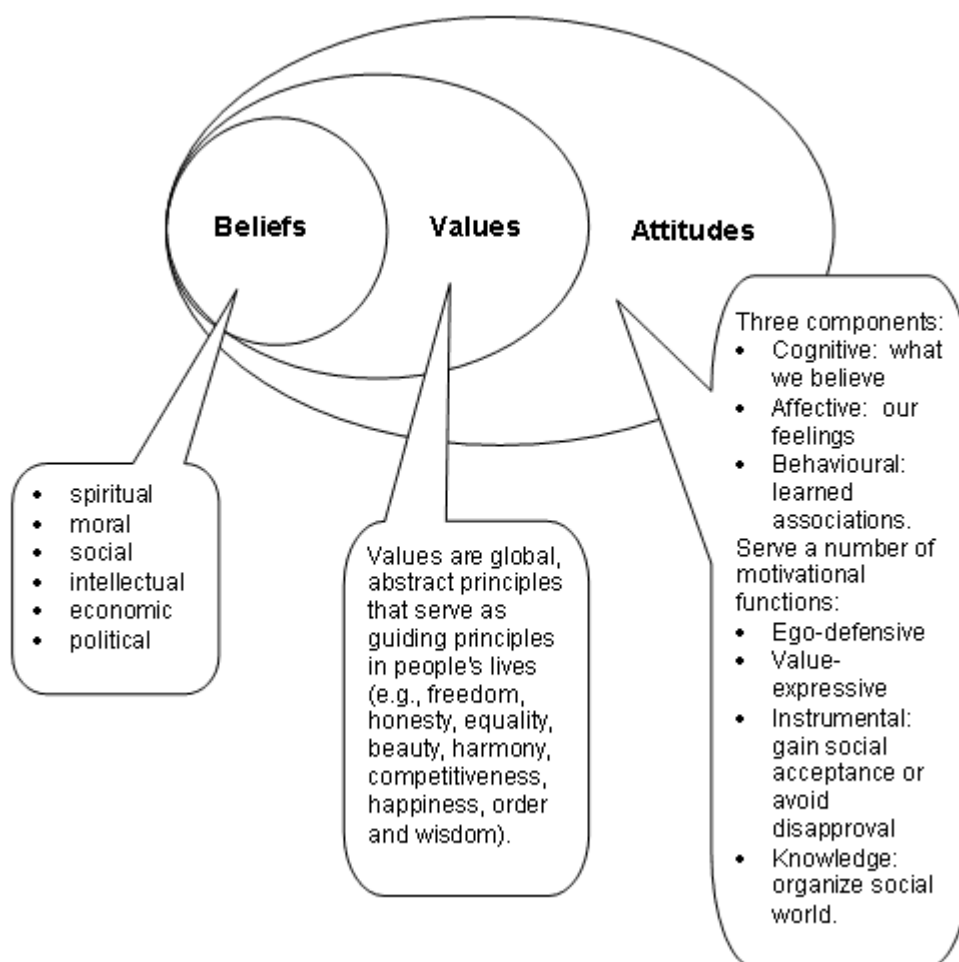
triggers a healthy thought process, therefore fostering teamwork, communication, collaboration, and problem-solving abilities, which are critical in organization success. Fallah (2017) has noted that organizations benefit from a positive workplace attitude as happy clients recommend the brand to other prospective consumers, increasing sales and ultimately corporate profitability.

Lastly, organizational values describe the core principles and ethics held by a company and which employees are expected to abide by (Michalos 2014, p.6650). The organization value systems impact a wide range of corporate aspects, including how an organization does business and how it treats its workers and consumers. Defining and promoting the values held by an organization can benefit businesses by;

- Guiding staff behaviour and reducing the risk of inappropriate behaviour
- Strengthening the employment value proposition
- Guiding strategic and operational decisions by the management
- Enhancing organization's ethical character as expressed in its culture and operations
- Demonstrating corporate integrity and accountability to external stakeholders
- Attracting business partners and talents

Although values, beliefs, and attitudes are related as they all collectively affect the workforce character, personality, perceptions, and behaviours, there is a distinctive difference between them. As summarized by figure 2 below, while attitudes are standpoints that an organization embraces regarding certain issues, values are built upon the organization's moral attributes and beliefs. In other words, while values showcase the workforce's morale, ethics and overall character, attitudes highlight the workforce behaviour through personality. When

it comes to beliefs and values, the force entails the assumption that an organization make about the world, and values stem from the beliefs. An organization's values are things that it deems important based on beliefs, such as loyalty, preservation, honesty, equality, and conservation of the environment. As noted by Fallah (2017), values are more or less permanent because they depend on the embrace beliefs, but attitudes are a result of experiences and therefore are more likely to change based on an individual or organization's experiences. In order for the belief to change, an organization has to live through an intense episode that can prove to the business that the formerly held beliefs are no longer valid and need to change (Fallah 2017, p.22)



Tesco beliefs, attitudes, and value systems and their impact during the pandemic

Overall, Tesco values, attitudes, and beliefs are embedded in the way in which the organization does business and handles customers and employees. The company believes in equality, and therefore the company gives equal opportunities to prospective employees. Tesco welcomes cultural diversity, older and younger people, and people with disabilities into the workforce. In light of these beliefs and values, the company provides for various career paths and patterns of working, comprehensive employees' benefits, and a good work-life balance. The company's stores offer students, parents, and other groups a wide range of hours from which to choose from, and the employees are offered a spectrum of benefits, including staff discounts, staff bonuses, healthcare schemes, and pension schemes. Understanding people, including customers, colleagues, and communities, and what matters to them and striving to make those aspects better is also at the heart of the company's attitudes and ideological systems. The company believes that looking after the workforce, consumers, and the community in a culture of trust, transparency, accountability, and respect is essential for its success.

Tesco's beliefs, attitudes, and value system have both enabled and hindered the company's ability to effectively respond to the Covid-19 pandemic and the measures that have been implemented by authorities to curb the spread of the pandemic. For instance, in line with belief on the importance of the community, its employees, and consumers, the company in 2020 donated over £60m worth of meals to charities and foodbank, supporting those in need in the society (Murphy, 2021). Besides, in line with the caring element of its attitudes and values, the company has been ensured that the elderly and vulnerable customers are prioritized in the human delivery programs. However, the company has struggled to implement the same values, particularly regarding recent recruitment, because the firm has been forced to exclude those vulnerable to the pandemic, including the elderly. Besides, the

company has occasionally failed to meet the consumers' needs and expectations during the pandemic due to product shortages associated with the lockdown challenges affecting the company's international supply chain system. During the first phase of the pandemic, consumers were restricted to a few items, and they were encouraged to buy only what they needed so that others could access the essentials (Tesco, 2021). In addition, the company, in line with its values towards the employees, has been striving to ensure the safety and well-being of the workers while at the same time maintaining business continuity. This strategy has had critical financial implications because the company has been forced to embrace costly policies requiring the provision of paid sick leaves to all employees with Covid-19 symptoms and ensuring that every employee has personal protective equipment.

Management theories

Taylor scientific theory

The Taylor scientific theory is one of the essential approaches in administrative theory. F W Taylor developed the theory in the wake of the new industrial revolution that occurred in the latter part of the 19th century. Taylor came up with the scientific theory of management to solve complex organizational problems that occurred due to the industrial revolution. In his work, the greatest concern was why there was so much inefficiency and antagonism. Taylor believed that true science is the only effective management, which can be used in all social activities such as the management of homes, philanthropic institutions, government, universities, churches, and farms (Gull, 2017, p. 68). In addition, he believed that using engineering principles would help decrease waste and maximize efficiency and production. According to Nethavhani (2020, p. 2), Taylor identified three origins of

inefficiencies and antagonism: worker's misleading beliefs that more output would result in unemployment inescapably, substandard management systems which make employees limit output to guard their interests, and the rule of thumb which is effort wasting and inefficient. Taylor argued that eradicating these three antagonism and inefficient origins would contribute to employer and employee's success. Furthermore, Taylor believed that to achieve greater prosperity for both the employees and the employer; it is relevant to consider the four principles: scientific investigation, cooperation or harmony between the employer and employee, division of work, and scientific selection and training development of employees. In this theory, the employers or the top-level management do not scold the employees but rather rewards them for increasing productivity.

Taylor scientific theory impacts the beliefs, attitudes, and values

In Tesco, Taylor's scientific theory of management helps increase the overall productivity of employees and the organization. The organization offers different motivation processes from the higher-level management to improve the efficiency of employees. Currently, the Covid-19 pandemic has redefined how workplace employees and employers relate to each other. Workers in Tesco have different reactions to different situations, which seemed normal before the Covid-19 pandemic. Workers must adapt wearing face masks, social distance, and working from home. Tesco has the obligation of designing a workplace that responds to fear and anxiety relating to the Covid-19 pandemic and the range of attitudes and behaviours that have emerged through the crisis. It is important to note that workers have different beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours on interpreting Taylor's scientific theory with the pandemic. With the emergence of the pandemic, beliefs, attitudes, and values have largely played a huge role in Taylor's scientific theory of management with reference to employee

satisfaction and organizational productivity. According to Skarmeas et al. (2008, p. 25), Tesco uses different scientific tools and techniques in their business operation processes that help them influence their development process. These tools and techniques increase to a greater extent the satisfaction level of the employees to stay in the organization. For example, they use the employee reward program to offer financial aid to the employees to motivate them.

System theory

The system theory is commonly regarded as the basis of organizational development. This management theory takes the organization as an open system comprising inter-dependent and interrelated parts that relate together as sub-systems (Chikere & Nwoka, 2015, p. 3). Therefore, based on the System theory of management, the organization comprises a unified singular system, which again comprises sub-systems. For instance, a company is made up of sub-systems, including production, marketing, accounting, and finance. The numerous sub-systems are studied in their inter-relationships instead of isolating them from one another. The whole system is affected by the internal and external aspects of the sub-units (Gordon, 2021). The organization interacts with its environment for important resources such as the suppliers who supply materials, customers who buy products and services, shareholders investing in the organization, employees managing and providing labour, and the regulating body (government). According to Sinkovics et al. (2013, p. 133), the organization efficiency is improved due to the systematic approach. When smooth functions and the system functions are effectively maintained, it results in better cooperation between everyone. The overall systematic approaches and team working constraints are performed accordingly to improve efficiency. Within an organization, managers make the best decisions necessary to improve the overall efficiency.

Impacts of the systems theory on the beliefs, attitudes, and values

In Tesco, the system approach helps the management impact the sub-systems and help other individuals relate with the organization given the changing beliefs, attitudes, and values due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Theodosiou and Katsikea (2012, p. 261) argue that workers follow important beliefs and those that motivate them. Employees are encouraged to have a positive attitude, making it easy for them to concentrate on their work and respect the organization or make a belief. The functions of the Tesco organization is to assist the management to function effectively and develop opportunities relevant to increase employee's satisfaction level. Amid the covid-19 pandemic, the positive employee's atmosphere makes it possible to acquire coordination in Tesco and ensure that everyone speeds up productivity.

McGregor's Theory X and Y

Management theorist Douglas McGregor developed Theory X and Theory Y. These theories are based on the assumption that management needs to coordinate all facets of the value delivery process for the organization to be productive. According to Touma's (2021, p. 21) theory, X and Y comprise two different management styles that have some philosophy taken by each style manager. Nevertheless, both theories are based on ways to motivate workers and thus, they consider the feel of characters for their employees. Each of theories X and Y has its philosophy from its end. For instance, theory X emphasizes that employees can be motivated through rewards and punishments.

On the other hand, Theory Y believes that self-esteem, self-management, and management by objective leading are the leading factors to intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. McGregor emphasized that theory X is an autocratic management style where the top

management leaders or the managers owns the centralization of power. The leader makes decisions without the opinion of his employees or colleagues. The decision reflects the manager's personality, demonstrating a confident image and a perfect hands-on managed organization. The theorist believed that people do not like work and should be directed, controlled, monitored, or forced through rewards or punishment to keep them working. As for theory Y, McGregor believed that mental effort distribution is expected instead of desired. Employee commitment is considered the foremost essential behaviour associated with their achievement.

Impacts of the theory X and Y on the beliefs, attitudes, and values

With the Covid-19 radically redefining the Tesco organization, lack of motivation among employees and reduced productivity have been managerial concerns. The organization must design a workplace that responds to the challenges that make business continuity hard due to fear and anxiety of threats of the pandemic and the changing behaviours and attitudes. In response to the challenges that demotivate workers in Tesco amid the pandemic, the management has taken the theory X approach to run the organization. The employees' worry of being infected by the pandemic has contributed to some workers' dislike for work. In addition, some Tesco workers working remotely due to the pandemic lack self-control and self-direction to achieve the organization goals and objectives. Thus, the leaders have recognized that trusting, respecting, providing realistic goals, and a conducive working environment are necessary to maintain employees' motivation. In addition, Tesco has embraced an employee reward program with financial reward packages to motivate employees. The organization has gone beyond money as the only motivating factor and supports the employee's varied lifestyles through relevant and targeted benefits.

Critical Thinking Models

There is a distinctive requirement for critical thinking currently in the business world due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Considering the massive shutdowns of countries worldwide, businesses such as Tesco require analytical and reasoning skills to face the uncertainties. As seen earlier, critical thinking is a person's ability to evaluate and dissect information without bias and develop relevant solutions. Critical thinking skills are necessary for the Tesco organization since they help individual workers and groups function efficiently as well as analyze issues and identify the potential risks that are not visible at face value. Fortunately, critical thinking can be taught or applied in organizations to help develop firms and deal with ongoing challenging situations. To enhance Tesco organization continuity through the pandemic, some of the critical thinking models that the management requires to apply include the Red Model, De Bono's six thinking hats model, Alfaro Lefevre 4-Circle CT (Critical Thinking) model, and Benner's Novice to Expert theory.

Red Model

The Red Model developed by Pearson can help Tesco management deal with low morale and decreased productivity during the challenging Covid-19 times. The Red Model is a powerful and effective critical thinking tool, which gives an organization management a step by step and systematic process to examine people, issues, problems, and events. The Red Model critical thinking steps include recognizing assumptions, evaluating arguments, and drawing conclusions. According to Chartrand et al. (2009, p. 1), recognizing assumptions refers to a person's ability to distinguish between facts and opinions. Managers in Tesco organization can teach the employees to correctly identify when they critically consider the validity of assumptions that have been made during the Covid-19 pandemic to ensure that

they effectively deal with challenges in the organization. Evaluating arguments refer to the skills related to the systematic analysis of arguments and evidence given. In Tesco, leaders and employees can be taught to be objective and logically work through any arguments and information. They can withhold their judgment and critically evaluate the arguments in any challenging situation. Finally, drawing conclusions refers to bringing together all the available information and coming to a logical conclusion with the given evidence. Therefore, amid the Covid-19, Tesco management can apply the RED Model of critical thinking (recognize assumptions, evaluate arguments, and draw conclusions) to make better decisions which can help motivate the employees and improve workplace productivity.

De BONO's 6 Thinking Hats Model

De BONO's 6 Thinking Hats Model is another critical thinking model that can enhance Tesco's decision-making process effectiveness. The daunting political, cultural, environmental, and socio-economic forces arising due to the Covid-19 pandemic have made the operational environment of Tesco unpredictable and organization of all sorts. Therefore, to avoid the probability of the factors that can stop Tesco from achieving its missions and objectives, the management needs to apply the De BONO's 6 Thinking Hats Model and counter the negative effects of the beliefs, attitudes, and value systems that have arisen during the Covid-19 pandemic (Rangi & Aithal, 2020, p. 1). The De BONO's 6 Thinking Hats Model investigate a problem from numerous perspectives, yet in a conflict-free and clear way. This critical thinking model can be applied in Tesco organization by observing the blue hat, the white hat, the green hat, the yellow hat, the red hat, and the black hat (Rangi & Aithal, 2020, p. 4-5).

Metaphorically, the blue hat can be worn by the manager or the leader controlling the employees or addressing a problem. This leader normally gives the team the scope, goals, and agenda. The employees can be encouraged to wear the green hat, which characterizes critical thinking, exploring various ideas and the possible way forward. They can also be encouraged to wear the red hat, which characterizes feelings and instincts. Employees engaged in the red hat should be taught to express their feelings without justifying the logic. Leaders and employees can wear the yellow hat and ensure that they look at challenging issues as positively as possible. The white hat worn by Tesco leaders should ensure that they cautiously assess risks and use critical judgement. Finally, leaders and employees wearing white hat should gather the missing information to address a problem. Using the Six thinking hats techniques, leaders and employees can make quality decisions in more organized thinking.

Recommendations

The undertaken review has shown Tesco Plc is facing enormous challenges during the pandemic, and the company's adaptability and sustainability during the pandemic have both been positively and negatively impacted by the embraced organization beliefs, attitudes, and value systems. As suggested by the reviewed management theories and critical thinking models, tailoring key workplace changes, including those around the corporate culture and value systems, could effectively enable the company to tackle the challenges it is currently facing and create a more resilient business post the pandemic. As noted by Cerutti and Grodoski (2020), there are several behaviours and attitudes that will reshape the workplace post-Covid. Employees will have a newly heightened consciousness of each other, space, and surfaces, the needs around mental health and well-being will increase, and there will be a

heightened desire for reconnection and creation of community (Cerutti and Grodoski 2020, p.1).

Reimagining employee engagement in the contemporary workplaces, whose structure and processes have significantly been altered in the face of the pandemic, requires a significant change in organizational culture and core strategies. As argued by Maslow's theory of motivation, an individual can effectively focus on growth and development once their basic needs have been met (Macauley 2015, p.298). The same principles can be applied by contemporary organizations such as Tesco to improve employee engagement. While creating on-boarding solid processes and holding frequent team-building activities have conventionally been used to ensure employee engagement, the current era requires one to go beyond meeting the basic needs.

One of the adverse consequences of working remotely is losing track of time and failing to identify an ideal work-life balance. Without proper boundaries, work may erode into non-work time, resulting in burnout and reduced quality of life. As noted by Breevaart et al. (2014), employees need to feel they have more control over their work lives in order for them to feel engaged. To this end, organizations need to focus on employees' work-life balance by defining the working hours that everyone should follow. Besides, employees need to feel that they belong to a group or organization in order to engage positive emotions (Osborne and Hammoud 2017, p.55). To see the value of the work at Tesco, employees need to first identify the links between their personal values and organizational goals and objectives. Once this happens, the employees may passionately express their commitment to the organization and their determination to achieve its mission. Today, a work community can be ideally created

by making employees part of the conversation, encouraging them to share their skills, and strengthening employees' bonds through group activities.

Frequent, transparent, and consistent communication is one of the strategies that can improve employees' focus, engagement, and motivation post-Covid. It improves employees' awareness of their expectations and ensures that both the workers and the management are on the same page. Frequent communication can be attained by Tesco through structured daily check-ins. This could take the form of one-on-one calls or team calls, depending on whether the employees work independently from each other or together as a team. It would be important to make these calls regular and predictable so that both employees can prepare for these sessions and make the most out of them. Employees' competence across different roles or tasks significantly determines their engagement in different organization processes, such as decision making. To this end, it's imperative to enhance employees' skills development and growth opportunities in order to keep them engaged, particularly in the face of the various changes facing contemporary organizations.

Conclusion

The ongoing Covid-19 pandemic has caused significant disruptions in workplaces as organizations have been forced to enact a wide range of measures to keep the employees safe. Among these precautionary measures have been the closure of non-essential departments and the implementation of virtual workplace strategies, allowing the employees to work in the comfort of their homes. With some of the changes brought about by the pandemic here to stay, organizations need to reform their belief, attitudes, and value system for enhanced business resilience and success. While there is no silver-bullet solution for the ongoing pandemic, Tesco's response should be structured around changing how it engages its

employees, customers, and partners. This would be critical in ensuring that the employees and customers have some degree of psychological safety as the company implement further changes, including those around the organization structure and processes. While the Covid-19 pandemic presents some significant challenges for corporate leaders, it also offers significant opportunities for growth in avenues such as employees' and customers' engagement and engagement in e-commerce.

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