



**International Journal of Biology, Pharmacy
and Allied Sciences (IJBPAS)**

'A Bridge Between Laboratory and Reader'

www.ijbpas.com

ORGANIZATIONAL HEALTH AND WHAT WE SHOULD KNOW ABOUT IT

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ABSTRACT

In this paper an attempt is made to collect the definitions of health and organizational health terms in dictionary and also the vision of management science theorists about organizational health. Then the issues which are essential and must be addressed in this regard are discussed such as “health creating resources in organizations, the most important factors in creating and maintaining organizational health, importance of organizational health, seven dimensions of organizational health, The relationship between climate, culture and organization health, organizational health and principals decision making.” In other words, we gathered organizational health and what we should know about it.

Keywords: Organizational health, Resources, Principals, Culture, Theorists

INTRODUCTION:

Organizational Health Definition:

Every human being or human system such as an organization has three different modes in an environment. At one end there is distress and illness, in the middle there is normal situation and at the other end there is health. Distress and illness circumstances are a set of individual and environmental and high-tension situations that lead people in an

organization have functions less than expected and less than their potential and also the industry average. Normal circumstances are situations in which individual and organizational performance is at the expected level in comparison to the industry average. The health is a status of individuals and organizations that allow having a performance higher than usual

expectation or even higher than all competitors. Here organization changed to the best in its class, and also a productive, agile and flexible entity. Due to the lack of permanent motivating in a healthy system, that system gradually enters to normal status and the continuation of this condition moves the entity toward illness situation (Toosi, 2003).

Health means the absence of disease and failure in an organism. The occurrence of a serious illness may cause irreparable damage to the organism, or even lead to its death. Organizational health implies a description beyond the short-term effectiveness of the organization and mentions to a set of relatively enduring organizational characteristics. A healthy organization, in this sense, not only remains stable in its environment, but also in long term it is able to adapt sufficiently to the environment, and consistently creates and expands necessary capabilities to its own survival (Miles, LA 200).

In a healthy organization principal has a quite friendly and supportive behavior with his employees and has unity in his programs. Employees are also more willing to stay and work in this organization and fulfill their tasks more effectively (Shariatmadari, 2009). In healthy organizations employees are

committed and conscientious and constructive and have a high spirits and performance. Healthy organization is where people come to work with enthusiasm and are proud to work in this location (Mirkamali & Malekinia, 2008). Organizations that have organizational health will lead their energy to goals and causes the trust and good mood and as a result increase the efficiency and effectiveness of employees in the organization (Miles, 1999 - Pudineh 2013).

According to Richard Bechrđ healthy organization is an organization which is managed based on "management by objective" (Borumand, 2004). Brooke Aver states the concept of healthy organizations that is applied to make concept and organizational climate is a concept that is arises as an important or effective variable (Hoy & Feldman, 1989).

McFarland (1995) in the context of a healthy organization states that "the idea of health stresses on life and growth. Organization is a dynamic system that the rate of changes constantly forms the evolution of the organization and then attitude, behavior and life of a large number of employees. A professional organization is healthy if it can improve in a competitive and often hostile environment."

As Leiden and Klingel (2000) maintained organizational health is a fairly new concept and includes the ability of the organization to carry out its duties effectively for the organizational development and improvement. A healthy organization is where people want to stay there and work and they want to be instrumental (Mazlumi & Shahtalebi, 2010).

Health Creating Resources in Organizations:

Most studies have been done about organizational health suggest that there are two sources to create organizational health and success in the workplace. The most important organizational health source is the leadership style and direct behavior of principals toward people. The second source is the organizational model that creates creativity and cooperation as well as initiatives that do things in an above normal way. (Pudineh 2013) Studies conducted by the Intac Company (2002) shows that organization leadership behavior which is organizational health promoting is:

- Providing insight and direction, along with the freedom for individuals for innovation and individual initiatives.
- An exact description of expectations and requirements.

- Perception and repeated praise for good work and getting good feedback about performance.
- Resolving disputes in a fair and appropriate manner.
- Encourage development and learning.
- Protection of all persons, trust and respect for all (Zareie, 2006).

This study shows that the organization’s models that create an attractive place to work include:

- Having clear goals and celebrating all successes.
- Having shared values that are practiced throughout the organization.
- Provision of suitable materials, tools and equipment to do the work.
- Encourage communication and knowledge transfer.
- Bright and fair rewards (ibid.).

The Most Important Factors in Creating and Maintaining Organizational Health:

Studies show that the most effective leadership behaviors that lead to a healthy and productive workplace are (Pudineh 2013) the ability and willingness of principals to:

- Resolving disputes in a fair and appropriate manner.
- Providing the freedom for employees to do their work, along with providing

directions, tools and clear information.

- Providing comprehensive and direct feedbacks about performance.
- Support and trust.
- Respect for all individuals.

Also absence due to lack of health in an organization when minimizes that the following conditions exist in the organization.

- Knowledge and understanding of organizational goals.
- Direct feedback for good work.
- Demonstrating the behavior of employees with reflecting the values of the organization.
- Evidences of good communication and respect among employees (Naseri, 2003).

Naseri (2003) summarized important elements in organizational health as follow:



Figure 1-2: key elements of organizational health

Importance of Organizational Health:

To understand the importance of organizational health, we must first examine the consequences of lack of health in organizations. Existence of reduction stress in organizations has the following consequences:

- Reduction of employee satisfaction.
- Work and social disruption that occurred due to low performance of individuals or their frequent absences, increase stress on everyone.

- Increase in disputes.
- Reduction of innovation, cooperation and motivation.
- Failure to do projects in stipulated time.
- Reduction of services quality (Zareie, 2006).

In 1999, health care and absenteeism cost from work was over 9 billion dollars. This amount is about 13.4 percent of annual operating profit of all economic companies in Canada. In contrast, a study conducted by an

American consulting firm shows that a 5% increase in employee satisfaction leads to a 1.3% increase in customers (Barnard 2004).

Focusing on organization's health means focusing on the future success and is as important as sales rate or other short-term results of the organization. Today organization's ability to use the most power of employees' brain and help them to turn good ideas into customer-friendly products and services is a competitive factor in organizational excellence. About organizational health Miles believes organizational health implies a condition beyond the short-term effectiveness of the organization and mentions to a set of relatively enduring organizational characteristics. A healthy organization, in this sense, not only remains stable in its environment, but also is able to sufficiently adapt to its environment in long term and is able to consistently create and expand necessary skills for its survival (Miles, 2006). Based on Parsons' idea about organizational health, each organization has three institutional, administrative and technical levels. Institutional level includes one dimension of institutional integration. Institutional integration explains an organization that has unity in its educational programs and is able to successfully deal

with the external destructive forces. Administrative level includes principal's authority, consideration, developing and support of resources. Principal of a healthy organization can influence high level officials and obtain whatever he needs for effective management of organization. In addition to having friendly and warm relationship with employees and acceptance of their appropriate suggestions, principal of a healthy organization pays special attention to employees' personal well-being. Principal clarifies his expectations of employees, maintains rigorous standards of performance. In a healthy organization always facilities and equipment, materials and necessary training equipment and even additional equipment are available. Technical level includes the morale and scientific emphasis. In a healthy organization employees show passion for each other and for their work and have high spirits, high-level but achievable goals are determined for employees and there is a lot of emphasis on their progress (Hoy et al., 1993).

Organizational health is one of the most important indicators in principal evaluation. If the organization climate is unhealthy, inhibits the growth of employees and also makes them unhappy and as a result efficiency and effectiveness is reduced at a

very high level. In contrast, if organizations are healthy, personal growth of employees increase and also the efficiency and effectiveness of the system will increase (Barnard, 2004).

Davis summarized culture in terms of beliefs and divided it into two categories known as the guide beliefs (strategic) and everyday beliefs (operational). Everyday beliefs are the actual culture of the organization and should not be considered as guide beliefs. Everyday beliefs are the origin of behaviors that people show in their daily work and these beliefs command people that what they should know and what they should not know, what is acceptable behavior, what is not acceptable behavior; in short, they struggle for the survival of people in the organization. Guide beliefs are strategic beliefs of roots that organizations are made based on them and form the philosophy of the organization and are shaped as a fundamental objective and their expanse is to the extent that they can provide all kinds of conditions in their guidance (Davis, 1994. translated by Mirsepasi. P: 39).

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Parsons defines a healthy organization as: "all social systems must adapt themselves to the surrounding environment for survival and development, mobilize related resources to achieve their objectives, coordinate and harmonize their activities and motivate their employees. In this case, their health will be guaranteed "(Hoy et al., 1993).

From the perspective of Keith Davis an organization is health when employees feel they are doing something useful and achieve a sense of personal growth and development. They like and accept an exciting work that provides inner satisfaction. Many of employees search responsibility and opportunity for thriving job. They want to be listened to their speeches and treated them as if each person has individual value. They want to ensure that the organization really feels compassion for their needs and problems (Davis, 1994. translated by Mirsepasi. P: 39).

A continuous non-effective organization is not healthy certainly. In total, health implicitly implies the sum of effective doing. An organization which acts effectively in short time by decreasing costs or with quick action, may damage the morale and satisfaction of employees (Alagheband, 1992).

Saatchi describes healthy organization like this: a healthy organization fights with the current problems in relation to the environment and within the organization to survive, and to combat the problem it is necessary to recognize the problem and its dimensions. This organization is able to achieve its humanitarian goals and objectives to survive, and it can recognize barriers in achieving its goal and remove these obstacles. Such an organization must be flexible and be able to use its best resources to deal with any problem (Saatchi, 1996).

Miles expresses the health of an organization in ten aspects which includes:

1) Focus on goals: in a healthy organization, the aim of the system is reasonably clear for members of the system and is well accepted by them. This focus on the objective is considered as a necessary but not sufficient condition for organizational

health. Goals should be attainable and have available resources.

- 2) Adequacy of communication: because communications in organizations are face to face, transfer of information within them is vital. This aspect of organizational health suggests that vertical and horizontal communications across the system are relatively free of complications. In such an environment information will be transmitted with a minimum of complexity.
- 3) Optimal distribution of power: power distribution is relatively fair. Subordinates can affect higher groups and each superior can affect his superiors. In such an organization struggle would not be intense for power within the group. Although these struggles for power within the group are not severe, they exist undoubtedly.
- 4) Use of resources: in a healthy organization employees may work a lot, but they do not feel that they act against their will or against themselves or organization. There is a balance between the demands of employees and their job expectations. Employees feel "self-discovery".

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- 5) Unity and solidarity: Organizational health means that the organization "knows itself", its members are proud to belong to it, they want to remain in the organization, they want to be affected by it and they want to affect it.
 - 6) Morale: this idiom is a part of the well-being or satisfaction. However, satisfaction is not enough for health. High spirits in a healthy organization suggest a sense of well-being, happiness, satisfaction and gratification of employees.
 - 7) Innovation: healthy organization tends to create new morale, move towards new goals, new production, transformation, and being different over time. In other words, in the case of such an organization, it can be said that instead of staying steady and uniform it develops and changes. Reconstruction and modernization is an attribute of organizational health.
 - 8) Autonomy: Healthy person acts with desire and internal will and is almost needless of dependence on outside and obedience of resources as well as rebellion against external institutions. Similarly, health organization is passive toward external demands and does not know itself as tool of environment, and yet its response to the environment is not subversive and rebellious.
 - 9) Sustainability: autonomous and innovative features suggest that the person, group or healthy organization has realistic and effective relationship with environment.
 - 10) Adequacy of problem solving: each healthy organism always has pressures and examples of the lack of efficiency and effectiveness. The issue is not existence or nonexistence of problems but how the system faces problems and solves them. Argyris believes that in an effective system problems are solved with minimum energy, they remain solved and the mechanisms used to solve problems do not weaken but they are maintained or reinforced. Then an efficient organization has structures and developed methods for evaluating problems, devising possible solutions, deciding about solutions, use of them and evaluation of their performance (Sergiovanni and Starrat, 2003).
- According to Saatchi a healthy organization has following characteristics:**

- 1) The aims of the institute are clear for the majority of employees and activities are done for the purpose.
- 2) Employees have a sense of belonging to the organization and want to comment about problems.
- 3) Issues within the framework of existing facilities are solved actively and realistically. Employees work together to resolve problems informally and regardless of their official title and even question principal's comments.
- 4) The decision making to increase the efficiency of the organization is done on the basis of ability, responsibility and information.
- 5) Planning is done on the basis of facts and foresight, performance and discipline and in this case, there is morale of full cooperation. Responsibility is observed by the active participation of all members.
- 6) There is attention and respect for judgment and logical demands of employees in low levels of organization.
- 7) The issues are discussed and resolved includes personal needs and human relationships as well.
- 8) Collaboration is made freely and voluntarily. Employees are ready to accept help and try to help.
- 9) Whenever a crisis threatens the institution, employees unite and come together to solve it.
- 10) Contrast is important in making decisions and is effectively offered with colleagues. Employees express whatever they feel and expect others to do the same.
- 11) Learning by doing is a lot done based on the offers and tips and recommendations of instructor. Employees see each other as a talented and capable individual to learn and develop.
- 12) Honesty in relationships is quite evident and employees feel respect and belonging to each other.
- 13) Employees are fully mobile and participate in activities based on their choice and interest.
- 14) Management is applied flexibly and whenever it is necessary adapts himself to the changes of the environment.
- 15) Confidence, freedom and mutual responsibility is high between partners.

- 16) Risk taking as one of the conditions of development and change is accepted by principal and employees of the institute.
- 17) The Institute believes that people should learn from past mistakes which have left traces in the work.
- 18) Poor performance at the institute is immediately recognized and is solved collectively.
- 19) Organizational structure and policies and guidelines are set in a manner that can help employees perform their duties and guarantee health and survival of institute in long-term. Also whenever it is necessary organizational structure and policies and guidelines change quickly so organization can adapt itself to environmental conditions.
- 20) In addition to discipline, there is creative mobility in institute and there are a lot of innovations and initiatives. Traditional methods are often questioned and if they are not efficient, they are excluded.
- 21) Organization implements itself quickly with the market changes that are buyer of the organization's products or services. Because institute employees are always on the lookout

for these changes and predict future by their innovations (Saatchi, 1996).

Seven Dimensions of Organizational Health:

According to Hoy organizational health is divided into seven dimensions which include:

- 1) **Institutional Integration:** it refers to the organization's ability to adapt to its environment in a way that maintains its unity, doing and integrity of training programs. Employees are protected from unreasonable pressures and demands of clients and citizens. Organization is not fragile by the public pressures. Whenever environmental demands are not coordinate with applications of organizations, local groups and protester clients can not impact on the organization's operations. Organization and its management operate successfully in the face of external destructive forces (Hoy & Miskel, 1992). Horalick in support of employees states that (A) He must support employees against clients even if the client is wrong. If a principal wants to criticize an employee, he should discuss this with him in private. (B) He should support employees against clients. If principal

believes that the right is to the client, he should discuss privately with employee and he should never criticize employee in front of client (Shirazi, 2004).

- 2) **Principal Influence:** ability of organization's principal is to influence on bosses and his superior, encouraging them to pay more attention to the organization, do not face with hierarchical administrative barriers and do not be depended to superiors that all of these are key to effective leadership (Hoy & Miskel, 1992).

You are not obliged to love your boss and admire him. Also you should not hate him. However, you should manage him in a manner and have an influence on him that can be a source of personal achievement for you and success of the organization (Peter Drucker quotes Lupof, 2003). According to Lupof noticeable points for the influence of principals on superiors are as follow:

Praise the good points of your boss's behavior personally, support his aims in public and privately, voluntarily do routine tasks, try to find ways to save time and money or improve the

working environment, help him in preparation and training of new employees, help him to do things that you are stronger and more able in, let him and others to know that you are pride for working and for the opportunity to work with him (Lupof, 1993).

The point to note here is that contribution to principal and influence on him and finally taking him in hands is the duty of lower managers and the key of their victory as efficient principal of organization (Rezaei-Nejad, 2006).

- 3) **Consideration:** it mentions to the leadership behavior that is open and friendly. Consideration reflects the behavior of respect, mutual trust, cooperation and support. Consideration does not mean kindness and artificial and calculated cheerful, but honest attention to employees as professional colleagues (Hoy & Miskel, 1992). Khalili Shurini (1994) also defined consideration as: "Consideration or respect is behavioral factors related to leader's support, friendship, advocating, participation of subordinates, representing the

interests of subordinates, open relationships and recognition of their participation. These "relationship-oriented" behaviors are essential to create and maintain good relationships with subordinates "(ibid.).

In addition to having a friendly and warm relationship with employees, parents and clients and accepting their appropriate offers, the principal must also pay special attention to personal well-being of the Board of Education. In fact, creating a suitable environment in the organization is dependent to the ideas and behavior of principal about employees' lives outside the organization. The fact is that management and leadership training must have a broader sense of helping employee in the class. Principal should not neglect the importance of helping people in solving their personal problems (Wiles, 1993).

- 4) **Initiating Structure:** principal's behavior in specifying labor relations with employees clearly defines job expectations, performance standards and work methods. Principal's behavior is task-oriented and

workplace is structured and success-oriented. Initiating structure like consideration is one of the important aspects of effective leadership performance (Hoy & Miskel, 1992, translated by Seyyed Abbas Zadeh, P: 55).

Kerman (1991) defined construction as "This aspect reflects the degree to which an individual specifies his role and subordinates to achieve specific objectives. A high score in this aspect determines people, who play an active role in group activities through planning, transferring data, timetable, testing new ideas, etc (ibid.).

- 5) **Resource Support:** it is providing of work materials and equipment for organization and employees to implement the tasks effectively. Work equipment is readily available and employees' requests in this respect will be answered quickly (Hoy & Miskel, 1992, translated by Seyyed Abbas Zadeh, P: 55). To be able and willing to act in their professional duties, employees should have appropriate conditions which have three main parts:

1. Office supplies, including equipment, resources, space and other auxiliary facilities.
2. Administrative system that includes laws, regulations, communications and formations.
3. Human resources which are related to needs, interests, reputation, power and development of employees' capabilities and in other words job satisfaction.

6) **Morale:** it mentions to collective sense of friendship, openness and mutual trust between employees. They create an integrated and coherent unit that does their work and training activities with enthusiasm. Love each other and love their work, help each other and proud to the organization with a sense of pride (Hoy & Miskel, 1992, translated by Seyyed Abbas Zadeh, P: 59).

Morale is very important in human relations process, because it can reflect the general state of human relationships in an organization. Morale is a collection of man feelings, emotions and thoughts. Morale may be positive or negative. Positive morale is of those who are

satisfied with their work and profession and think that their work is useful for society and are in relation with right people in their working environment. Negative morale is of the people who are disappointed and pessimistic and distrust can be seen in their speech and behavior (Safi, 2008).

7) **Academic Emphasis:** it mentions to the extent that organization seeks scientific and cultural excellence and tries to achieve it. Organization has high standards but achievable in terms of academic performance of clients and learning environment is serious and orderly. Principals, employees and clients have the same amount of attempt to achieve academic success. Employees believe their clients and clients respond enthusiastically to their expectations. Clients respect to scientific and educational progress as a target and main work (Hoy & Miskel, 1992, translated by Abbas Zadeh, P: 95).

Wiles writes: "principle as an official leader should try to increase insight of employees about the different methods that can be achieved through the group thoughts and during the

creation of a permanent improvement, formal leadership must strive to strengthen unity and solidarity of group and venerate their empirical and theoretical activities and increase their investment in physical thought and create a spirit of trust and comfort in them and specify group jurisdiction and provide opportunities of growth for members of the group."(Pudineh 2013)

Organizational Health and Principals' Decision Making

Studying the organizational health status of the organization not only on its own terms is important to understand the work conditions and its dynamics, but also it is predictive of principals' decisions and the type of decisions that they make. Healthy organizations probably have several committed employees and principals who trust one another and believe high academic standards and decisions are taken collaborative and collectively. (Pudineh 2013) Organizational principals must observe followings in decision making to improve organizational health:

- Principals should be careful about situations that could become a crisis.
- Principals should maintain their calm during crises. If they feel afraid, of

course, employees will afraid too. They can have a calming influence.

- Principals should be aware that in a crisis situation, there are more risks, solution may need a kind of innovation, fear of making mistakes may prevent from in time decision making and their usefulness (Hazer, 2005).

Overreliance on the experiences of decision-makers as a source of information in decision-making can have multiple roles. But whenever a person experiences as only a guide and basis in decision-making are used, does not yield fruitful results and causes lack of others cooperation and makes the organization sick (Alvani, 1994). Decision-makers in the organization should make a decision based on accurate information and use a healthy system for data collection.

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