

Industrial Relations and Conflict Management Processes

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ABSTRACT

It is trite that the existence of conflict in an organization or industrial setting is indubitably indispensable. This points to the fact that man's interaction, relationship and co-existence with the fellow man is prone to conflict. Therefore, conflict is a state of disagreement between individuals, groups or organizations. Conflict management processes are the mediums or techniques adapted to control and curtail conflict. The objective of this article is to examine the nature of human relationship in an industrial setting or organizations and the way in which conflict can be managed effectively and efficiently when it arises, using various conflict management processes.

KEYWORDS:

Concept of Industrial Relations, Conflict Management Processes, Solutions and Brainstorming.

INTRODUCTION

Industrial relation; no matter how cordial, is not devoid of conflict, as such some scholars asserted that conflict is inevitable, destructive, irrational and injurious. However, when it is perceived in an organization, it should be controlled and curtailed instantaneously. The issue of conflict in an organization or industrial setting has undoubtedly becomes a great concern to management because of its destructive effect on industrial relations and growth. Conflicts mostly arise as a result of employees competing for scarce resources. Ford (2007), opined that conflict remains an inevitable

situation in everyday life either between individuals, groups, societies or organizations at large. It is logical therefore to say that, the manner in which conflict is controlled determines whether it is going to be beneficial or damaging in nature, (Matthew'etals2019).

In industrial setting, conflict is said to be the presence of disagreement between different individuals with varied opinions, goals and values that affects the general interest of the organization at large. It is also a process whereby people within the system work against each other's interest. There are different perspectives to the issue of conflict in an organization. To some, it is perceived as a destructive state that has to be circumvented if possible at all cost. While others see it as a platform that compels administrators to be on their toes, and also, as an avenue for personal development and more often times people use it to their advantages. Fox (2001) postulated that conflict occurs when parties in an organization have a negative perception towards one another and they no longer trust themselves. Based on this contention, it can be presumed that conflict will always exist, be it between groups, administrative members or among organizations in the same line of business. However, organizational conflicts from business point of view, has to do with a disagreement that occurs when the values, aims, and interests of different people or groups are not compatible with one another. Hence, the need to frustrate each other in order for the set goals not to be achieved. Lewis, French & Steane, (1997) observed that organizational conflict is inevitable because it is a product of mismatch of people's values and it arises from divergent behaviors, (Matthew'etal, 2019). As a corollary to the above purview, it is sacrosanct to examine the concept of industrial relations and conflict management processes in this article.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This article examines the concept of industrial relations and conflict management processes through a literature review. A study has been conducted of Hundred (100) staff of MBI Aesthetic Ltd to predict the commonalities in conflict management processes using behavioral method.

BEHAVIOURAL METHOD

Industrial relations and conflict management processes are behavioral methods used to resolve conflict. These behaviors are a consequence of both external circumstances and the individual's own method of interaction with people and problems; and are chosen dependent upon the relative significance of one's concern for self, vis-à-vis concern for others. Management of conflict is extremely important for the effective functioning of organizations and for the personal, cultural and social development of humanity. The manner in which conflict is managed can cause more tension in some circumstances than conflict itself. Therefore, any expert who is involved in conflict management process should be objective and not subjective.

Thomas and Kilmann identified five methods of dealing with conflict along two dimensions of behavior. The five methods are: Competing (assertive and uncooperative), collaborating (assertive and cooperative), Compromising (falls into the middle) and accommodating (unassertive and cooperative).

A study by Rahim (2002) identifies the common incidence of conflict either between management, employees or groups within the organization and comes to the conclusion that the term conflict is inevitable in an industrial setting. The study further argues that conflict is bad and can as well be prevented. The finest process for conflict management is either to avoid or find a lasting solution to it, when it occurs.

CONTEMPORARY METHOD

This method or approach is explained as the interaction that involves both the society and its environment. The scholars perceive conflict as a required condition of industrial relations and it shows how an organization is to be reactive to change. The scholars here are of the opinion that conflict is both purposeful and receptive to change. Therefore, the study concludes that the best approach to handling organizational conflict is not to subdue or resolve it but provide a strategy, so as to reduce its destructive consequences.

CONCEPT OF INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

Industrial relations connote the relationships between employers and employees towards each other in terms of supervision, direction, planning and coordination of organizational activities, with minimal human efforts and functions; all done with an enthusiastic spirit taking into consideration the safety of all employees. Industrial relations can also be seen as a relationship between the employees and management.

Industrial relations constitute one of the most delicate and complex problems of the modern industrial society. This phenomenon of a new complex industrial set-up is directly attributable to the emergence of Industrial Revolution. The pre-industrial revolution period was characterized by a simple process of manufacture, small scale investment, local markets and small number of persons employed. Due to the personal and direct relationship between the employer and employee, it was easier to secure cooperation of the latter. Any conflict, grievance or misunderstanding on the part of either party could be instantaneously resolved. Also, there was no interference by the state in the economic activities of the people. Under such a set-up industrial relations were simple, direct and personal. This situation began to change with the advent of industrial revolution, as the size of the business increased and thereby necessitating investment of huge financial and human resources. This era birth a new breed of

professional managers triggering dichotomy between the ownership and management, and relationship between the employer and employees. This new set-up rendered the old philosophy of industrial relations irrelevant and gave rise to complex, indirect and impersonal industrial relations (Pradiq, 2015).

CONFLICT MANAGEMENT PROCESSES

Conflict management involves analyzing the conflict and then solving it (Matta & Corby, 2000). According to Barki and Hartwick (2001) and Robbins (2003), the best practice to solve the conflict is to look back at the process itself. In addition, Warner (2000) stated that the conflict management process came with the building blocks such as conflict analysis, conflict management plan and also capacity building and implementation. Apart from that, according to Pierce, Gardner & Dunham (2007), the conflict process is from the individual's experience itself regarding the frustration, the individual conceptualization of conflict, a conflicting style which is one of them is conflict resolution. Meanwhile according to the Satterfield, Friday-Stroud & Shivers-Blackwell (2007) has described a conflict process with stages such incompatibility or even potential opposition, intentions, behavior and outcomes and classifications of conflicts. Meanwhile for the Ng, Pena-Mora & Tamaki (2007) provide the resolutions steps including prevention, negotiation and also trust that will give effect on the conflict and negotiations process. Apart from that, according to Mosaic (2012) the conflict management process with steps such as acknowledgement, action, analyses and attitude. According to Stoner, Freeman & Gilbert (1998), the conflict management process involve persuasion, communication and also power. This is because the main reason for the conflict management process is by knowing the facts to always remain calm and listen to others.

From various literatures, it can be identified that in general the first step for the conflict management process is to identify the conflict. This step will make the employees assess the first of the causes of conflict. For example, at this first stage of the conflict management process, the

employees will get information regarding the issue of the conflict and try to judge the situation carefully to deal with the situation with consideration. The different conflict also can be learned at this stage as the law for it different. The second step is to analyze the conflict. This is to make it more understandable regarding the situations and also prioritize and clarify the issues that need to be addressed. Besides that, it is to identify the root causes that contribute to the factors that cause the conflict. By doing that it is to identify all the information provided regarding the conflict and also further information needed so as to enhance all the problem-solving skills. The next step which is step number three is to identify alternative solutions. After knowing the point of the conflict, the next step is to identify how the situation can be changed. This can be made by discussions to resolve any conflict that happens. Listening skill also involved. List out possible solutions that can be taken to reduce or resolve the conflict management process. After identifying the alternative solutions then the next step is by applying conflict resolutions techniques. By doing this try to encourage participants to discuss the situation in a good manner and don't use pressure to reach an agreement. Besides that, all the resolutions technique should be based on the right law to apply because it involves playing with the issue. Next step is choosing the best alternative. Regarding all the conflict resolution technique it should be able to express clearly and firmly. Recognize all the advantages and disadvantages of each conflict resolution so that all the way or method can be done according to the situation. By listening carefully to the different issue can solve the problem. For example, by using an active listening skill for

both parties can help to solve the problem because it needs both cooperation's. Focusing on listening will help to prevent the conversation from becoming heated and out of hand too (Sabiroh, 2021) of agreed conduct, while resources conflicts are those coming from different concern groups which are contending or fighting for administrative resources (David 2012).

Robbins (2005) further identifies another set of organizational conflicts sources and indicates that when the root source of conflict is acknowledged or known, it will bring about proper conflict management within the system. Some of the sources are; communicational conflict, which comes up as a result of misunderstanding. Structural conflicts emerge due to business roles and individual conflicts are all about individual differences. Similarly, Suliman & Abdulla (2005) conducted yet another study and identified conflict sources which include; politics and priority characterization, personality and allocation of resource, unresolved prior conflicts, procedures in administration, communication and leadership problem. Another study by Duke (1999) further identifies.

EMPIRICAL REVIEW

Conflict is obviously connected with power and it mostly arises when the stated objective and goals of any business enterprise is circumvented. Previous scholars on the issue of conflict are of the view that, the root source of conflicts is deeply entrenched in our biology. Schellernberg (1999) describes such approach as individual characteristics theory that focuses on the individual and his acts, rather than the context of the act. However, Fajana (2002) develops in his study two major sources where conflict can emerge in an organization. These are external and internal sources respectively. The external sources of conflict occur because of its peculiarity, meaning that it is always

from outside the organization. It has to do with a situation when a third party intervention to industrial dispute is required and which most of the time is one sided or biased. Meanwhile, the internal sources of conflicts are referred to as those elements which are in-built within the structure of an organization. Some key features when it comes to internal sources of conflict were identified which are; opposing interests, divergent interests, poor-relationship e.t.c (Fajana, 2002).

Another perspective to sources of conflict in an organization is a study by Katz (1990) who categorizes conflict sources into three groups. They are; structural conflict- which has to do with conflict arising when a department depends on another department in order to function effectively. Role conflict- this is a conflict which emanated as a result of special sets other major sources of conflict to corroborate earlier submissions. These are interpersonal disagreements which occur when an individual is stressed up; the problems of role conflict; and power struggles that makes people join forces together to achieve personal selfish interest (Matthew Et al 2019).

CONFLICT AND ITS EFFECT ON INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

Conflict in an industrial setting should not be perceived in a negative form; its outcome, be it constructive or destructive, largely depends on how it is being handled and managed by those in position of authority. Conflict can come in a different form within the organization. It can be between superior and subordinate, heads of department etc. Groups can also be involved when it comes to issue of conflict based on performance as well as unknown management rivalries. It is a general assumption that there is always a negative consequence of conflict for the organization and individual. The effects can be in the form of Physiological responses (headache, hypertension and heartburn), Behavioral responses (alcoholism, aggressiveness, work sabotage and decreased

communication) and Psychological responses (work anxiety, frustration and job dissatisfaction). However, one can conclude that conflict does not only hinder the performance of individuals, but can also lead to emotional disorders, which invariably affects the individuals' health in the long run.

DATA AND METHODOLOGY

Industrial Relations and conflict management processes examined in this article used a descriptive research design. The research targeted a working population of one hundred (100) employees of MBI Aesthetic Ltd. A simple random sampling technique was adopted in selecting a sample size of one hundred (100). A structured questionnaire was adopted as a research instrument for the study. However, from the one hundred questionnaires administered, only eighty were filled and returned appropriately. The questionnaire was divided into 2 major sections. The first part of the questionnaire sought for the demographic reports of the respondents, while the second part comprised 20 items questions to be answered in Likert scale format ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree with numerical value 5-1, which was used to measure pertinent constructs of (identifying conflict, analyze conflict, brainstorming, create alternative solutions, select a solution, implement the solution, review the impact and close the case) independent and dependent variables for the study. The data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequency counts, mean and standard deviation) and inferential statistics of (Pearson correlation coefficient).

RESULT AND FINDINGS

This section presented the findings on the work process currently practiced by staff that works at the MBI Aesthetic Ltd. in handling cases related to conflict management gained from the intersession in the qualitative research phase. To ensure the

confidentiality of the respondents' information, the respondents will not be disclosed. During the interview sessions, the respondents were asked how they handled the cases involving conflict between employee and employer when the cases were assigned to them. They were also asked to explain in details all the processes that they undertook during the case management. In overall, this study found that different employee follows a different work process in handling the cases.

Reason being there is no standard work process available in the company that they can follow. Some of the respondents mentioned that when they were not sure what they are supposed to do, they will ask their colleague or other senior staff to help them. They find it difficult to carry out their work due to the absence of a standard work process in the company.

Apart from that, this study also found that some staff follows a shorter work process than the other.

Some steps in the conflict management process were skipped because they are not aware of it. This could lead to a negative outcome from the conflict management process and would not help the parties involved in resolving their conflict.

Based on the results, we classified the process into eight processes which include:

Identify a conflict - Conflict exists when there is the dissatisfaction between two parties, i.e. the employee or employer. Most of the cases started when an employee files a report towards his employer. The case will then be assigned to a staff that will be in-charged to resolve the conflict. Cases of the conflict include dismissal without just cause and failure to comply with statutory requirements by the employer.

Analyze the conflict - In this process, the management will analyze the conflict based on the report that he received from the employee. The manager will analyze if the

employee has a valid case against the employer by analyzing the employee's statement and evidence provided. This is also to ensure that the next step can be taken according to the law and to avoid waste of time.

Brainstorming - During this process, the manager is allowed to discuss the strategy of how the conflict could be resolved with his superiors and colleagues. The manager is free to ask another staff what step they should take to resolve the conflict. The idea and opinion flow freely during this time. The brainstorming session allows some alternatives to be outlined and the best suitable strategy to resolve the conflict will be selected later on.

Create alternative solutions - During the brainstorming session, the manager usually will come out with a few alternative solutions that can be applied to resolve the conflict.

Select a Solution - During this process, the manager called both parties involved in the conflict for a meeting and offers the alternative solutions that he has prepared earlier. This process is carried out to achieve a good decision together. This is to avoid the conflict from continuing any longer or pending decisions to resolve the conflict. However, sometime during this time, both parties cannot agree on a decision to resolve the conflict. If both parties cannot agree to a decision, the case will proceed to a court trial. Trial or hearing is considered to be the last step for both parties.

Implement the solution - Most cases will cause some sort of dissatisfaction to the employee as well as the employer. A manager must act with fairness and cannot take any side. Thus, during this process, the manager will implement the solution as agreed by both parties in the previous stage.

Review the impact - According to the company's standard operating procedure, all reported cases should be resolved within 90 days from the date of the report was made. However, this is only applicable to all cases that could be resolved by the managing director without going into trial. After the implementation of the selected solution, the manager will review the case until all necessary said action has been taken according to what has been agreed by both parties in the earlier discussion.

Close case - After all the necessary actions have been taken, the case will be closed. However, the documentation related to the case will be retained in the company file for a record for at least three years.

All these components that were found in the conflict management process play an important role and related to each other for resolving the conflict. Based on the analysis that has been done during the interview sessions, this research summarizes the findings and presents it as a conflict management processes.

CONCLUSION

The way and manner through which conflict is been resolved in an organization will determine the level of coherence within the system. Hence, this study examined industrial relations and conflict management processes. However, findings from this research revealed that industrial relations are not devoid of conflict and it is established that some conflicts can be constructive or destructive to an organization. Furthermore, the study classified the conflict management processes into eight components, which include: identify a conflict, analyze the conflict, brainstorming, create alternative solution, implement the solution, review the impact and close case.

The study further shows that all the components that were found in the conflict management processes play vital role and are related to each other for resolving conflict and restores industrial relations and coexistence. The study empathically discussed the importance of industrial relations devoid of conflict and how it boasts organizational growth and development.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Arising from the study, the following under listed points are herewith recommended:

- i. There is need for organization to develop different processes and policies that can promote industrial relations and coexistence.
- ii. Industrial conflict should be controlled and curtailed, in order to avoid the destructive effects of conflict on the organization.
- iii. There is need for effective and proper communication procedures to be put in place in order to resolve conflict.
- iv. Management should provide an avenue for different departments in the organization to be part of the decision making process- by so doing they will have a sense of belonging in the organization.
- v. It is also going to be of benefit if there is adequate interaction and dialogue in conflict management processes.
- vi. Management should also organize trainings, workshops, seminars that centered on conflict management periodically for all members of staff in the organization.

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