

EMPLOYEE GRIEVANCE MANAGEMENT IN THE ORGANIZATION: A THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

Phalguni Kongjengbam

Faculty, School of Management, Khongnangthaba University, Imphal East, Manipur, India

Laishram Prabhakar Singh

Professor, Manipur Institute of Management Studies(MIMS), Manipur University,
Canchipur, Imphal, Manipur, India

ABSTRACT

The study examines various theoretical perspectives on how organizations deal with employee grievances. It examines how crucial it is to address employee grievances in order to maintain a productive workplace. The study looks at several theoretical models, such as psychological contract theory, to analyze the dynamics of employee grievances.

It also examines how organizational cultures, communication routes, and leadership philosophies affect grievance management procedures. Handling grievances also affects how a person behaves. The abstract's goal is to increase understanding of how a theoretical viewpoint can direct practical methods for managing employee grievances and fostering a positive workplace culture. This essay offers a comprehensive examination of the theoretical framework for managing employee grievances while accounting for recently pertinent elements in the ever-changing workplace.

Keywords: Grievance, Employee grievance, Grievance Management, Theory

INTRODUCTION:

The introduction of this paper establishes the framework for a thorough investigation of employee grievance management, utilizing a range of theoretical perspectives to elucidate the subtleties of organizational dynamics.

This study examines both conventional and modern theories that support the understanding of employee grievances, keeping in mind the crucial role that effective grievance resolution plays in fostering a positive work environment. Employee grievances have a significant impact on morality, motivation, labor-management relations, and the company's overall effectiveness when they are handled poorly or not at all (Aboagye and Benyebaar, 2012). As the workplace evolves, so do the difficulties in resolving and preventing grievances. The introduction emphasizes how important it is to adapt grievance management strategies to the changing nature of the workplace, taking into consideration factors like emotional intelligence and the subtleties of remote work. Research indicates that it might either promote or discourage "disruptive behaviour," which could affect performance and job satisfaction as well as the union's relationship with the employer or the resentful party (Gordon and Bowlby, 1988; Klaas, 1989; Fiortio et al. 1988; Fryxell and Gordon, 1989).

Theoretical frameworks such as social exchange theory, psychological contract theory, and justice theory are presented as essential pillars. These frameworks shed light on the complexities of employee-employer relationships and the dynamics that could give rise to grievances. Additionally, the introduction sets the stage for a discussion of novel topics, such as the importance of group dynamics, emotional health, and the unique challenges of working remotely. The paper intends to advance a thorough understanding of employee grievance

handling by taking this theoretical detour and offering the framework for knowledgeable strategies that are sensitive to the complexities of contemporary workplaces.

GRIEVANCE

A grievance is an actual or perceived injustice or complaint that an individual or group within an organization encounters. Unfair treatment, discrimination at work, interpersonal disputes, and unsatisfactory working conditions are just a few of the many types of grievances. Glueck (1979) defined grievances as formal disputes between management and employees regarding working conditions.

Grievances can be resolved formally through formal complaint procedures or informally by maintaining open lines of communication with supervisors or coworkers. Uncertain policies, inadequate communication, unfair treatment, a lack of recognition, or issues with workload and job responsibilities are common causes of grievances. Bean (1996) noted that workers' dissatisfaction with their treatment is the root of grievances. The majority of organizations have a formal grievance resolution process that involves reporting the problems, conducting an investigation, and making decisions.

Effective grievance resolution is crucial to maintaining positive employee relations because unresolved issues can lower morale and productivity. Employers and employees should keep track of grievances so that the issue, the steps taken to resolve it, and the outcome are all clearly documented. Employees who disagree with the company's policy can also file grievances (Ayadurai, 1996).

Grievances can be avoided in part by taking proactive steps like fair policies, frequent communication, and employee engagement programs. Organizations must understand the legal implications of filing grievances in order to guarantee compliance with labour laws and regulations. Feedback loops for grievance resolution can address systemic issues and enhance workplace regulations, which can result in organizational improvement.

EMPLOYEE GRIEVANCE MANAGEMENT

Responding to and resolving concerns, grievances, or complaints that workers within an organization may bring up is known as managing employee grievances. Maintaining a positive work environment and contented workers is crucial. In order to address employee complaints, a company may implement particular protocols, such as open communication, which encourages staff members to express any worries they may have.

Document identification and recording is essential to grievance management because it makes it easier to understand the type, scope, and potential impacts on the workplace. A thorough investigation is required since it helps collect pertinent information and establish the veracity of the grievance.

Encourage teamwork in the search for solutions by attempting to settle disputes amicably through informal talks or mediation. In order to guarantee fairness and transparency in the grievance resolution process, formal grievance procedures should be implemented for more complicated or unresolved issues.

Addressing and resolving complaints appropriately, which may entail taking corrective, disciplinary, or policy changes as needed. establishing a feedback loop to assess the effectiveness of the resolution and identify areas that require improvement in the grievance management process. Employee grievance management demonstrates an organization's dedication to resolving employee concerns, which raises employee morale, reduces attrition, and fosters a positive work environment.

THEORIES RELEVANT TO EMPLOYEE GRIEVANCE MANAGEMENT:

1. Psychological Contract Theory:

It focuses on the unwritten commitments and obligations that employers and employees have to one another. The phrase "psychological work contract" was coined by Argyris (1960) to characterize how the values of both the organization and the individual are ingrained in the employment relationship. Guest (2004a) makes the case that the workplace has become more fragmented as new and more flexible forms of employment have emerged.

At the same time, managers have become more tolerant of drawn-out and slow negotiating processes under conventional employment relations frameworks. As a result, promises and agreements made in good faith one day are quickly broken due to different market pressures. With the decline of collective bargaining and the rise of so-called individualist values among workers, informal agreements are becoming much more significant in the workplace.

It is therefore claimed that the "traditional" literature on employment relations is out of step with how the workplace is changing. Given the increasingly distinctive and varied nature of employment, a framework such as the psychological contract, which represents the needs of the individual with implicit and unspoken expectations about employment, can easily gain favour as an alluring, "alternative" paradigm for studying people at work.

When perceived breaches of these implicit agreements occur, grievances may surface. Understanding and adhering to the psychological contract can help prevent and resolve grievances. Employees frequently come to work with preconceived notions about what is expected of them (e.g., loyalty, working in the company's best interest), and what their employer expects of them (e.g., opportunities for skill development, competitive pay).

The initial structure of the psychological contract is influenced by recruiters' and other sources' initial impressions of employer promises. But neither the employer nor the employee can fully describe what may be an indefinite employment arrangement. As a result, psychological contracts often alter over time in reaction to fresh, important information (Rousseau, Tomprou, & Motes, 2013).

2. Social Exchange Theory:

People engage in the social expectation that they will be rewarded for avoiding penalties, according to the Social Exchange Theory (SET). It is based on the idea that people weigh the benefits and drawbacks when deciding how involved and committed they want to be in a relationship. Despite the fact that different viewpoints on the idea have been put forth, theorists agree that social exchange is a series of interactions leading to obligations (Emerson, 1976).

In SET, these relationships are usually seen as interdependent and reliant on each other's behaviour (Blau, 1964). Relationships at work are similar to social exchanges in which employees put forth effort and expect to receive particular benefits in return, according to social exchange theory. If workers feel that their benefits and contributions are not equal, they have the right to file grievances.

Sustaining an equitable and just social exchange is necessary for effective grievance management. Fostering high-quality relationships is important to SET, but as we'll

see, this will only occur in certain circumstances. When employers "take care of employees," positive social exchange relationships emerge.

In other words, the social exchange relationship acts as an intervening variable or mediator. It promotes fair and advantageous transactions between people in solid relationships, which in turn encourages employees to have positive attitudes and productive work behaviors. This school of thought has produced a great deal of work, the majority of which uses Blau's (1964) framework to describe social exchange relationships.

3. Justice Theory

The "justice theory" of organizational psychology addresses how people view fairness in the workplace. It includes multiple dimensions:

i. **Distributive justice:**

Focuses on the fairness of the awards or outcomes. Employees assess how fairly resources are distributed, including pay, promotions, and recognition. Folger and Cropanzano (1998) defined distributive justice as the "perceived fairness of the outcomes or allocations that an individual receives" (p. xxi). Greenberg (1987) discussed the proactive and reactive content theories of distributive justice. Reactive content theories focus on how people respond to unfair treatment in terms of outcome distributions, whereas proactive content theories focus on how people create equitable outcome distributions.

ii. **Procedural Justice:**

Relates to the impartiality of the decision-making procedures. Employees evaluate whether decision-making procedures, like performance reviews or dispute resolution, are transparent, unbiased, and allow employee participation. According to research, unfair decision-making processes are associated with a number of negative consequences, such as lower productivity, higher intentions to quit the company, higher theft, and lower levels of organizational commitment and civic engagement (Cropanzano & Greenberg, 1997; Folger & Cropanzano, 1998).

Procedural justice was defined as "fairness issues concerning the methods, mechanisms, and processes used to determine outcomes" by Folger and Cropanzano (1998) (p. 26).

iii. **Interactional Justice:**

relates to how well individuals are treated and interact with one another during the decision-making process. Workers evaluate whether they receive sufficient justification for decisions and are treated with respect and dignity. Bies and Moag (1986) define interactional justice as people's worries about "the quality of the interpersonal treatment they receive during the enactment of organizational procedures" (p. 44).

According to Folger and Cropanzano (1998), a decision-making process consists of two parts: the informal interactions between the decision-makers and the recipients, which represent interactional justice, and the formal structural component, which is represented by Leventhal's six justice rules.

4. Agency theory

In employee grievance management, the relationship between employees (the principals) and management or decision-makers (the agents) is referred to as agency theory. The theory states that conflicts may result from the different interests of these two parties. The premise of agency theory is that an agent will act opportunistically, particularly if their interests conflict with the principal's (Mitchell a& Meacham, 2011, p. 151).

Because they are not fully informed about certain management decisions or actions, employees may file grievances. Open and transparent communication is necessary to close this information gap. James Burnham (1941) claimed that managers act in a self-serving and opportunistic way.

Although they are rarely discussed in agency research, these assumptions, which raise questions about managerial intentions, are highly consistent with agency theory. The staff member gives the management the power to decide on their behalf. If workers feel that management is not acting in their best interests, they have the right to file grievances. Harris & Raviv (1978) describe an agency paradigm that can be extended to employer-employee and insurer-insured.

Establishing trust and ensuring that decisions benefit both parties are crucial. Workers may argue if they believe that management's incentives do not align with the overall well-being of the workforce. Establishing grievance resolution processes that promote a fair and just workplace and are in the best interests of both parties is essential.

To make sure management behaviour aligns with employee expectations and welfare, effective grievance management requires mechanisms for monitoring and reinforcing it. This quickly resolves grievances and stops them.

Applying agency theory to employee grievance management includes identifying and resolving the inherent conflicts of interest between employees and management, keeping lines of communication open, and matching incentives to support a fair and satisfactory grievance resolution.

5. Human Relation theory:

Human relation theory highlights the importance of social connections and job satisfaction in the workplace. Within the framework of employee grievance management, this theory proposes that effective grievance resolution can be achieved through the cultivation of positive interpersonal relationships and the provision of emotional support to employees.

Sofer (cited in Oribabor, 2008; Babatunde, 2020) claims that the human relations theory has resulted in a greater focus on human issues in the worker-management process, a greater emphasis on effective communication, and a greater emphasis on reaching consensus and acceptance rather than merely issuing commands.

Actually, this means creating a work environment that values open communication, respect for one another, and trust. Human resource managers may focus on providing channels for employees to express their concerns, listening to their complaints, and helping to address underlying issues.

Onyeonoru (2005) contends that it is crucial for industrial organizations to treat people as rational beings before machines, despite the theory's flaws. By recognizing the human component of workplace dynamics, human relation theory aims to prevent

and resolve conflicts through understanding and collaboration, ultimately leading to a more harmonious work environment.

Difficulties may arise for organizations with different human resource capacities. Problems that can occasionally lead to obvious absenteeism, sabotage, output limitations, industrial conflicts, class consciousness, and other issues have given rise to numerous theoretical attempts to improve the organization of work and workers.

Among these conventional theories was Elton Mayo's human relations theory (1953). Organizations can align with the principles of human relations theory and foster a collaborative workplace where employees feel valued, heard, and part of a team by implementing these aspects into their grievance management procedures.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The handling of employee grievances is an essential part of organizational dynamics, and several theoretical perspectives emphasize the significance of this procedure and the best ways to manage it within an organization. This theory, which has its roots in the idea that pleasant social interactions enhance workplace satisfaction, places a strong emphasis on the necessity of promptly resolving grievances in order to preserve cordial employee relations.

Poor grievance handling can lead to dissatisfaction, which lowers morale and decreases productivity. According to the agency, complaints may arise from a conflict of interest between employees and management. Cooperation and trust are fostered and this gap is bridged through effective grievance handling.

Organizations that employ an agency approach aim to maximize the interests of both parties through a fair conflict resolution process. Theoretical frameworks like organizational justice emphasize the need for fair treatment in the workplace. Unresolved grievances may be perceived as unfair, which can lead to resentment and affect employee commitment. Distributive, procedural, and interactional justice principles are all in line with effective grievance management.

In conclusion, theoretical perspectives provide valuable insights into the complexity of handling employee grievances in organizations. In order to ensure justice, foster positive social relations, and align interests, effective grievance management is not only a reactive process but also a crucial part of proactive organizational strategy.

Organizations can develop a comprehensive understanding of grievances and make progress toward fair, effective, and fruitful conflict resolution by applying these theories. By identifying and resolving employee concerns, organizations can promote a positive work environment, boost employee satisfaction, and contribute to long-term success.

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