

Impact of Employee Grievance Management on Organizational Performance

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Abstract

This paper theoretically examined the impact of employee grievance management on organizational performance. The paper noted that effective management of employee grievance is essential for harmonious workplace relationship, bolstering of employee loyalty and commitment, as well as improvement of overall organizational productivity and performance. Conversely, lack of, or poor employee grievance management in organizations gives rise to negative organizational outcomes such as reduced productivity, absenteeism problem, disobeying of orders, indiscipline behavior and reduced quality of work. The study concluded that effective employee grievance management is vital for effective harmonious management-labour relationship which helps to enhanced organizational performance. It is recommended among others that grievances should be handle as quickly as possible as they are reported in order to ensure that the negative consequences of unresolved grievance are drastically reduced in the workplace. In addition, there should be a laid down grievance management procedure which managers will use as a guide to manage grievance occurrence within the workplace in order to ensure harmony, and improved employees morale which is important for organizational improved performance. Organizations should ensure that those in charge of employee's grievance management are well trained to enable them handle grievance and conflict issues very well, and should also educate their employees about grievance procedure arrangement available in their organization, and the need to follow laid down grievance procedure when presenting their grievances.

Keywords: *Employee grievance, grievance management, industrial harmony, organizational performance.*

Introduction

Today, the need to maintain a harmonious relationship in the workplace in order to boost employee morale, enhance organizational effectiveness, and improve organizational productivity has made the management of employee grievance a serious and vital organizational concern. Employee grievance management has emerged as a top priority for many right thinking managers and managements in our contemporary business arena, as organizations seeking to get the best out of every of its employees must have the capacity to maintain a harmonious management-labour relationship which is vital for organizational survival, success, effectiveness, and improved performance. The importance of effective employee grievance management has made organizations to begin to restructure their operating

procedures to accommodate their employee's feelings, opinions and views in order to gain the employees trust, loyalty and whole hearted commitment, especially when it comes to employees having channels to express their grievances to the management.

The nature and dimensions of challenges been witnessed today arising from poor management of employee grievance is something every organization must try to avoid at all cost. In fact, any organization that neglects to put in a place a proper employee grievance mechanism is making itself vulnerable to systemic inefficiencies that may likely consume the entire organization. Employee grievance management therefore is vital for continuous industrial harmony and organizational productivity. Grievance procedures are borne out of employee feeling of been violated by fellow employees or management. When a good grievance management procedure is in place, the organization is more likely to experience high employee morale, commitment, opportunity for reconciliation, and harmonious management-employee relations which is a vital necessity for improve organizational performance

Certainly, the role and objective of management does not end at only attracting, retaining, motivating employees, instilling sanctions necessary to elicit employee behaviour responses, but in also ensuring that an effective grievance management procedure is in place within the organization. Bean (1996) noted that issues of grievance results from employees been dissatisfaction with treatment meted out on them. Grievances do also results from employee's disagreement with their company's policy (Ayadurai, 1996). In other words, when a company policy is not clear to an employee and does not specifically state what and how things should be done, earned, or ways to express dissatisfaction by employees, grievance is likely to result. Hardeman (2004) observed that issue of grievance within the organization is identified as the protest of the employee against the application of the policies that are considered to be unjust or unfair. In his opinion, Salamon (2000) state that grievance is bound to occur when management fails to honour or live up to the terms of agreement it entered with the employees and, or their representatives. However, since it may not be totally possible to stop grievances from occurring in organization, settling it as fast as it occurs at it root is very vital in order to stop the grievance from escalating to the point where it becomes a problem that may likely consume an organization. When grievance occurs, productivity goes down as employee's morale and commitments are generally affected (Juneja, 2018).

Effective handling of employee grievance is a vital role of the personnel managers in organizations today. Danku, Apeteley, Aboagye and Benyebaar (2015) contend that when grievances are left unhandled or improperly handled, they have profound influence on motivation, moral, management-labour relationships and negatively affect the productivity of the organization, therefore, must be tackled with all seriousness. ACAS (2011) posit that managers try to reduce grievances and other challenges that do arise within an organization's workplace by utilizing laid down procedure. Management and immediate supervisors therefore have a serious role to play in effective management of employees' grievance.

Grievances are therefore indications of dissatisfaction on the part of individual members of an organization, and groups with members that have common interest. The suppression of grievances has far-reaching implications for the survival, growth and performance of industrial organizations. Suppressed workers grievances can give rise to informal strikes, sabotage, high degree of absenteeism, low morale, quarrels, suspicion, lack of commitment and accidents at the workplace with its serious consequences on productivity and improved performance. Meyer (1994) contends that a confirmed grievance showed that a manager's behaviour breached a workers right. Noe, Hollenbeck, Gerhart and Wright (2003) contend that the presence of much

grievances in an organization is a sign of much problem just as too few grievance. Therefore, little or no grievance rate may suggest a fear of filing a grievance, signifying lack of faith in it or that the grievance procedure is not effective. Thus, organizations desiring effectiveness and increase performance must have a well-structured employee grievance handling procedure.

This paper seeks to utilize a theoretical approach to examine the impact of employee grievance management on organizational performance in workplaces. Some causes of workplace grievance were identified and valuable recommendations were offered, among others.

Literature Review

Employees Grievance Procedure

Grievance refers to any genuine or imaginary feeling of dissatisfaction or injustice which an employee experiences about his job and its nature, about the management policies and procedures which are expressed by the employee and brought to the notice of the management and the organization (Juneja, 2018). Rose (2004) defines grievance as any dissatisfaction regarding work and workplace expressed by employee in a formal way to his immediate supervisor. Grievances are indications of dissatisfaction of individual member with the ways things are playing out in their workplaces. Thus, employee grievance refers to any act of employee dissatisfaction cause by his immediate supervisor as regarding his work and workplace (Rose, 2004). Grievance also refers to a matter raised by employee to express dissatisfaction with management behaviour and is an attempt to bring out changes (D’Cruz, 1999). It is any discontent dissatisfaction, expressed or not, and whether valid or not, arising out of anything connected with the organization which the employee thinks, believed, or even feels is unfair, unjust or inequitable that he has suffered (Dwivedi, 2009). Due to various changes taken place in organizations, and also because of differences in the ways people behaves and perceive thing, there are chances that complaints and disputes must exist at workplaces.

A grievance therefore could arise out of poorly or wrongly interpretation, administration or alleged violation of the general or specific terms of the collective agreement between managements and labour, and when employees’ expectations are not fulfilled from the organization as a result of which a feeling of discontentment and dissatisfaction arises. Grievance is usually filled by an employee when he or she feels that his rights has been violated or that aspect of work agreement he entered with an organization either personally or through collective agreement of union or relevant agencies has been altered. Bean (1994) believes that grievances are usually associated with dissatisfaction felt by an employee with his/her working conditions and procedures

Employee grievance represents a feeling of dissatisfaction or discontent on the part of a worker resulting from the actions or decision of supervisors or top management. It is any real or imagined feeling of personal injustice which an employee has concerning his employment relation. Hardeman (2004) defines grievance procedure as a method through which employees make their voice known about management practices and/or decisions, in order to have them properly resolved. Jones and Gorge (2000) posit that disagreements are always an inevitable part of organizational life. However, management always put in place some processes and procedures which can be followed to ensure that every of such conflicts and grievance are resolved. These processes are known as employee grievance procedures, and are much in line with the principle of “due process” (Mante-Meija and Enid (1991) which guarantees the application of procedural of justice and ethical decision making in organization. Arvey and Jones (1985) see grievance procedure as a process through which an employee can bring workplace concerns to upper levels of management. These definitions entails that a well

formulated grievances procedure can enhance positive organizational outcomes and contribute to the effectiveness of management, as well as creation of a harmonious management-labour relations. The process is more formal and requires that it be followed strictly. Accordingly, individual grievance processed through several stages as outlined in the collective grievances is resolved through union-management meeting. In other words, grievance procedure is a mechanism of upward communication adopted by industrial organizations for the purpose of bringing workers grievance to the surface for handling. These definitions entails that a well formulated grievances procedure can enhance positive organizational outcomes and contribute to the effectiveness of management, as well as creation of a harmonious management-labour relations.

According to Ubeku (1975; 211) “An employee cannot do effective work if he or she is aggrieved against his supervisor or the organization in general. The depression he experience due to his grievances will make his morale to be low and as a result his efficiency drops, irrespective of whether he enjoys the work or if he is well paid or not. Unless the individual performing the job feels he is being fairly treated, his morale will be adversely affected”. However, when an employee feels aggrieved as a result of neglect, unfair or unjust decision or actions of the manager or direct supervisor, there are opportunities for him to make his feeling or grievance known to the top management through grievance procedures set up by the management. According to Juneja (2018), grievance lower employees morale and efficiency, and when unattended to, result in frustration, dissatisfaction, low productivity, lack of interest in work, absenteeism,

Importance of Grievance Procedures

The potential of grievances is always present at work. There is hardly any firm that can operate without one form of grievance or the other. However, the manner and speed with which those grievances are handled speaks much about the how the harmony, productivity and performance of the organization will be. Hence, handling grievance through appropriate procedures plays a key role in the settlement of management’s mistakes and weakness. If grievances are handled with a proper concern and consideration, they will initiate positive changes in the organization, thereby enhancing organizational productivity and employee satisfaction. The importance of having grievance procedure in place in an organization is that if an employee does not have opportunity to express his or her grievance, it will create some negative organizational impact which may include reduced productivity, absenteeism problem, disobeying of orders, indiscipline behavior and reduced quality of work, among others. According to Bagram (2007), the rationale for grievance procedures is to help individual organization attain its best in terms of employee’s performance and service delivery. He however pointed out that in most cases the procedures are management centered and may not allow employees to initiate expression of their dissatisfaction with regard to their work situations.

Ubeku (1975:218) argued that, “where there is no machinery for the effective settlement of grievances; they can have disruptive influences on the running of the organization. A good grievance procedure help to settle grievance issues at the earliest possible stage and help that such disputes are resolve as close as possible to their source (Cole, 2002: 443). Chances are that morale may go down, commitment reduces, and the worker may engage in some act of sabotage as a pay back to the supervisor or management. In order to ensure workplace stability, management-workers cooperation, and industrial peace and effective grievance procedure is in place in an organization. This is because suppressed workers grievances are known to have given arise to accidents at the workplace, absenteeism, strike actions, and different forms of industrial sabotage, low morale and reduction in employee’s commitment.

Presence of grievance handling procedures will help the employees in addressing their issues and concerns and are important for sustaining high satisfaction high productivity of employees (Huselid 1995; and Huselid, Jackson, and Schuler, 1997).

A good grievance procedure help management understand the feelings and attitude, of the workers concerning the organizations' polices, practices and rules, thereby helping them to make necessary improvement in policies and rules. It also serves as a medium for upward communication to organization top management, and makes them become more aware of employee's frustration, problems and general expectation. As a result, help an employee to release the pressures that has accumulated because of the grievance. It serves as a tool for management to maintain an open and harmonious relationship with the employees within the workplace, identify questionable practices and areas of discontents in the organization and provides measures of correcting the questionable or faulty practices or policies, and reduces the likelihood or arbitrary action by supervisors as they know that employees can protest such behaviour to tap management, where the supervisor may even be cautioned.

Dimensions of Employee Grievance Management

Effective grievance management is an essential part of personnel management; it is the management process of handling the grievance that occurred in a work place in more productive way. An effective employee grievance management ensures a peaceful harmonious work environment because it redresses the grievance to mutual satisfaction of both the employees and the managers, and also helps the management to frame policies and procedures acceptable to the employees. Accordingly, the use of an effective approach in managing an employee grievance is essential to resolving employees' dissatisfaction fairly. On their own, Mante-Meija & Enid (1991) argue that the choice of an effective way of managing an employee's grievance ensures justice in the management of employee grievance and helps managers to base their decisions on ethical codes of conduct.

Collective bargaining

According to Poole and Warner (2001), collective bargaining is the institutional processes by which union workers and their management or employers negotiate with the aim of determining the appropriate terms and conditions of workers employment. It is the process through which agreement between management and workers is reached with regards to wages, working hours and working conditions of employees at the organization (www.mywestford.com, 2016).

Workplace negotiations are usually undertaken by employees' union on behalf of an employee or employees in order to present a formidable front which management finds difficult to turn down. It usually covers general negotiations on employee's work hours, health and safety, salaries and grievances, training, overtime, grievance mechanisms, and even employee's rights to participate in workplace (Futureofworking.com 2016). Collective bargaining is a process of negotiation between employers and a group of employees aimed at agreements to regulate working salaries, working conditions, benefits, and other aspects of workers' compensation and rights. The interests of the employees are commonly presented by representatives of a trade union to which the employees belong.

Poole and Warner (2001) noted that collective bargaining helps to counter balance the undue advantage that employers have when employees collectively negotiate or make their demands. With collective bargaining, interests of the employees are commonly presented by representatives of a trade union to which the employees belong. Collective bargaining thus is an essential ingredient for industrial harmony in industrial relations. Collective bargaining

helps to make the relation between employees and employers smooth, and help in preventing the employees from carrying out strikes actions, provision of security and stability to tenures of employees, offering of protection to all employees, keeps abusive employees powerless and promotes spirit of oneness among employees (Futureofworking.com 2016).

Open Door Policy: this refers to an organization's communication policy in which top management encourages openness and transparency from the employees of the organization by granting them unlimited access to the top management offices for them to make their complaints or contribute ideas which they believe will help to move the organization forward. According to Francis (2018), an open door policy enables an employee to approach top management and discuss issues such as job performance, co-worker conflicts, innovative ideas for business improvement and company policies. In addition, open door policy encourages effective communication between the employee and the management. It also eliminates room for confusion when the employees directly interact with their superiors. Moreover, it encourages healthy discussion at the workplace and enables the employees to seek their boss's help and freely discuss things with them for better clarity. Furthermore, open door policy fosters an environment of cooperation and respect between the senior management team and employees (Juneja, 2018).

Concept of organizational performance

Organizational performance can be seen as the actual output or results that an organization has achieved output (or goals and objectives). It is the extent to which an organization was able to perform when it compare it goals, targets, or propose with those of its competitor. According to Emenike (2016) organizational performance refers to "how corporation performs on contain criteria as profitability, market share, return on asset, and return on investment. In other words, level of profitability, market share which the firm control in the industry, and the returns from their assets and investment defines an organizational performance". Darroch & Mcnaughton (2005) define corporate performance as a firm's position in an industry in relation to competition and industry average". Organizational performance thus is the outcome of the performance or individuals and the entire groups in the organization. Individual performance lead to group (unit/department) performance and the performance of all the groups translate to the organization's performance.

Scholam, Rose and Krupp (2005) argued that "organizational performance can be operationalized in many ways which includes "profitability, market share, return on assets or investment, changes in market share or profitability and new product success. They also identified customer's loyalty, sales growth and long-term survival. They contend that "corporate performance can be satisfactory or unsatisfactory depending on if it is high or low respectively. Drucker (1994) posit that corporate performance is the balance between all factors of production (Human and Materials) that will give the greatest output for the smallest efforts". In the words of Chen, et al (2006), organizational performance is the "transformation of inputs into outputs for achieving certain outcomes. Madanchian, Hussein, Noordin and Teherdoost (2006) noted that the ability of an organization to achieve its goals is organizational performance. In his view, Daft (2000) defines organizational performance as "the ability of an organization to attain its goals by using resources in an effective and efficient manner".

Profitability

Profit making is important for every business organization. Obiekwe (2012) notes profitability is the primary goal of every business venture. Without profit, it will be very difficult for any business to survive in the long term. The major reason why business

organizations are adopting various business strategies in order to gain competitive advantages in the fact that they can acquire the financial resources to sustain human component which drive the organizational, and to continue to provide goods and services in the most expedient way that they want. Enekwe *et al.* (2013) posit that profit is the ability of an enterprise to get sufficient return on the capital and the employees used in the business operation. Obiekwe (2012) contend that “profitability is measured with income and goals of all business ventures. Marianne (2013) notes that profitability is the primary arm of firms and also the most appropriate measures of efficiency in competitive business.

Relationship between the Employee Grievance Management and Organizational Performance

People are important ingredient for the survival and productivity of organizations. The ability of managements to ensure that their grievances are handled in an unbiased, just and fair manner is a plus to any management team as proper management of employee grievance ensure a harmonious relationship between management and workers. When harmonious management-workers relations exist, employees become more committed and this makes them to put in more efforts, which helps to improve performance. Melchades (2013) say that “employee performance is affected by any nature of grievance, and grievance management deal directly with workers and all that concern them, so can influence workers performance and productivity of organizations”.

Suppressed workers grievances are known to have given arise to accidents at the workplace, absenteeism, strike actions, and different forms of industrial sabotage, low morale and reduction in employee’s commitment. Therefore when management of employee grievance is in place, workers morale improves, commitment increases, and even organizational citizenship behavior develops, all of which are vital for improved organizational performance. According to Akanji (2005) a well-constructed and effective employee grievance management induces a positive performance, while poorly designed employee grievance management process is destructive as it heats up the work environment and brings about dislocation and disharmony of the entire organization with attendant reduction in productivity and performance of organizations. Through good conflict management strategies, weaknesses in the organizational decision-making are exposed which may prompt the establishment to effect changes and search for positive solutions (Longe, 2015). Hence, management are duty bound to resolve conflict properly for the sake of increasing organizational performance, because the outcome of such action will result in good communication, time management, good cooperation and increase corporate productivity (Obasan, 2011).

Conclusion

Effective management of employee grievance help management understands the feelings and attitude of the workers concerning the organizations’ polices practices and rules. It serves as a medium for upward communication to organization top management and provides the means of identifying the appropriate practices, procedures, and administrative policies that can cause the employee’s complaints to be considered, and it serves as a tool for management to maintain an open and harmonious relationship with the employees within the workplace, thereby reducing unnecessary crises which promotes organizational poor performances and inefficiency.

In addition, employee grievance management practice helps managers to identify questionable practices and areas of discontents in the organization and provides measures of correcting the questionable or faulty practices or policies. The study also reveals the importance of utilizing

collective bargaining as vital grievance management tool for effective harmonious management-labour relationship which helps to promote profitability and increase in market share of organizations, hence lead to enhanced organizational performance, effectiveness and survival.

5. Recommendations

Based on our literature and conclusion drawn, we recommend that grievances should be handle as quickly as possible as they are reported in order to ensure that the negative consequences of unresolved grievance does not manifest in the workplace. Secondly, since most grievances in workplaces are related to performance appraisal, rewards and incentives, salary, and general working conditions, management should ensure that it improves working conditions of her employees. In addition, organizations should ensure that those in-charges of employees grievance management should be well trained to enable them acquire the requisite human relations skills, and knowledge of the country's labour and industrial laws to increase their capacity in grievance and conflict handling.

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