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(REVIEW ARTICLE)

Conflict management in garment manufacturing company

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Abstract

Conflict is an imperative issue- even considered as burning issue in many industries- that is inevitably needed to dissolve or minimize in order to operate the organization successfully. Many researches and studies of conflict management have been conducted on several industries, but this researcher eagerly recognized to present an exclusive literature review on garment manufacturing industry not only from theoretical perspective but also based on his valuable long work-experience in this garment industry. It is hypothetically deemed by the garment factory owners and top management in Bangladesh that, somebody should research on this real-world issue in light of his/her acquaintance pertinent to this industry. The main purpose of this literature review is to present the practical and pervasive state of conflict management in garment manufacturing companies, and to find the techniques of resolution according to this researcher's practical experience. This study provides an extensive literature review on conflict management in the context of Bangladesh garment manufacturing industry. It described meticulously about conflict zones, conflict types, conflict process, and some treasured techniques of conflict control- especially applicable for garment factories. It is amplified that, to control or minimize conflict in garment factory, conflict resolution skills and attributes should be taken into consideration, and top management's positive intention is required to establish an effective conflict management system. Furthermore, along with the literature review, this study recommends some pragmatic solutions incorporating to different perspectives of conflict patterns and styles, and the guidelines of this study will lead the garment organizations to formulate defacto conflict management strategies for their employees.

Keywords: Conflict management; Garment factory; Conflict management system; Management strategy.

1. Introduction

Conflict, as an inescapable phenomenon in any organization, is always well-thought-out how to minimize the level of friction among different parties. While there is communication between employees and organization, there must be different opinions, values and dissidence (Haidarravy and Anshori, 2023) that should be minimized. Thus conflict management conform the set of actions how to dissolve or control any dispute or disagreement by constructive handling (Awalluddin and Maznorbalia, 2023), and to perform proficiently and effectively. Sustainable management system (Liam, 2024) is always committed to ensure the practice of conflict management processes by which, as the goal of organization, negative impacts could be minimalized and positive impacts are deemed further to capitalize for organizational improvement as a beneficial force (Achot and Kithinji, 2023). It is observed that pattern of conflicts displays different according to the organization type, structure and industrial functions. Latest research revealed that there is significant relationship between organizational performance and conflict strategies formulated by the management (Haidarravy and Anshori, 2023; Shehu-Usman, et al., 2024). Other quantitative research found the relationship between leadership style and conflict style (Naqvi and Anjum, 2024), and team leader's cooperative conflict management style is conductive to team innovation performance (Yin, et al., 2022). Therefore, the word 'conflict' is related to organizational management system including directions and policy. Another pertinent research found different dimension that 'work-family' conflict is a significant issue in Bangladesh garment industry which has negative

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impact on garment workers' health at individual level (Dreher et al., 2013). However, one decade earlier, a research has been conducted on garment sector that identified the major reasons of conflicts are; low wage and some other beneficial factors like- bonus, transport, medical facility etc. (Islam et al., 2014), but this research is going to explore the literature review with some more strategic facts and techniques.

   This article attempts to discuss conflict management landscape in the context of Bangladesh garment manufacturing industry. There are more than 5,000 garment factories in Bangladesh who are performing more that 80% export and contributing extensively into national income. Unlike other industry in Bangladesh, garment manufacturing companies are involved by enormous manpower for different functional activities. In a small size of garment factory that export one million USD per month consists of total manpower around a thousand of workers. On average, a medium size garment factory contains more than five thousand employees including workers and staffs, thus conflict management stands with as such importance for such volumetric labour oriented industry.

1.1. Conflict Panorama in Garment Factory

1.1.1. External conflict parties

- Buying office QC (Quality Controller) versus Factory QC
- Buying office Merchandiser versus Factory merchandiser
- Material supplier versus Factory merchandiser
- Garment Factory versus Bank.
- Internal conflict parties:
- Production versus Merchandising team
- Production versus Quality team
- Workers versus Admin department
- Merchandising versus Commercial and finance department.

Having a cosmic and comprehensive chain of working procedures, numerous reasons of ascending conflicts in garment manufacturing company, some of them are discussed as follows:
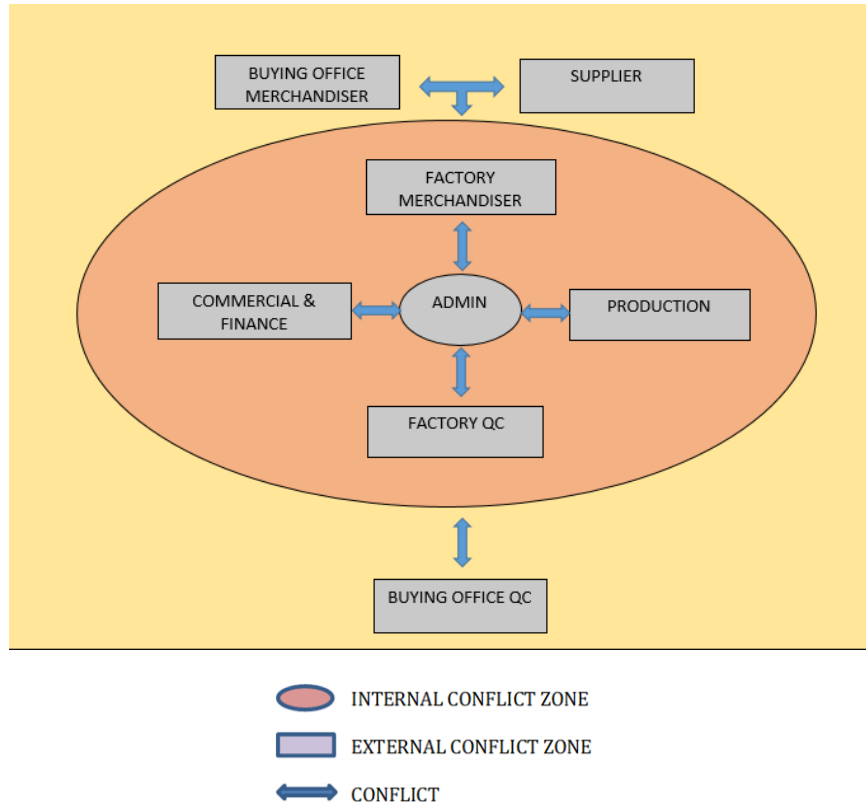

Figure 1 Conflict management panorama of garment manufacturing company.

1.3. Reasons of Conflict in Garment Manufacturing Company:

- Disagreements naturally create within the organization owing to existing different personalities and morality, characteristics, regional habits, different educational and cros-cultural background (Yin et al., 2022) and aspirations of individuals.
- Conflicts mainly come affront when business procedures are not wavetable to the employees; selected economical suppliers do not perform well but top management does not consider the issue, top management desperately push for critical buyers for which actually this company is not capable to perform due to infrastructure, capacity and quality level issues.
- One foremost reason of conflict is inefficient management system where one department's activities is often hindered by another department, or, one process is held up for another department's confirmation, cooperation (Kilag et al., 2024), and lukewarm attitude.
- Another great cause of conflicts in garment industry is- inefficient or inactive decision making and poor problem solving process in practice. Merchandisers often feel stalemate situation for lack of proper decision making process.
- When any goods delivery is failed or shipment cancelled that causes of huge financial loss, to identify the delinquent persons, conflict generates among the different functional wings; merchandising, production, and quality team. It results raising awkward competition of blaming each other. Hurtful comments and misunderstanding (Kilag et al., 2024) instigate and generate conflicts among the colleagues.
- Lack of communication (Kilag et al., 2024) procedure and inclusive planning system frequently form disputes and disagreements across the company, and with the external parties- buyers and suppliers.
- Job dissatisfactions are generated mostly by agonizing workload, low level salary and benefits, and pitiable working environment lead to administrative conflicts within the organization. Relationships among administrative peers (Kilag et al., 2024) are very important for conflict minimization.

1.4. Conflict Management Styles/Modes

There are 5 modes/styles of handling conflicts management in organization: accommodating, avoiding, competitive, compromising, and collaborating. These strategic styles have been defined and constructed upon different practical situation in the workplace of garment manufacturing company.

- ❖ Do you want to resolve conflict within the shortest time and without any challenging effort? The best mode is accommodating where you need to be strong and affirmed mentally to engross others' problems. Exclusively applicable when you join in a new garment factory where adaptation with new working environment is indispensable. Sacrificing but it will help you for future conflict handling in more assertive way, because by this time, gradually you will be well-known about the new people and new management system. Not wise to be highlighted at the beginning of work in a new company rather save your time to proof yourself as a cooperative and nonchalant personality. Also for minor conflicts; harsh talk by managers to new employees, less facility in workplace, reactive communication from other departments, this accommodating style can be considered as the best strategy to perform. Every garment manufacturing company is full of difficult tasks even unlimited work to finish within constraint time, in that context accommodating style for conflict management is more convenient than others.
- ❖ There are some people somehow in all departments of a garment factory always engage upon making the process more complex and to hinder the working flow utmost in the group. Before the project commence, in planning, it is wise to remove them prudently form that particular workforce. This style defined as avoiding is mainly suggests to ignore the conflict parties/group uncomplainingly in advance.
- ❖ In case of any dilapidated situation under existing management practice which anticipates worse future than present even suspecting factory shutdown in near future, no way, top management of garment factory are compelled bound to taking some crucial strategic decisions how to recover as soon as possible. Then, certainly there raises some conflicts among the workers and employees breaching through typical processes practice. In order to gain financial worth and productivity (Shehu-Usman et al., 2024) quickly, top management has to dissolve these conflicts following competitive style where employees have very less scope to input their opinion. Because it is the question of business survival- not apt for any negotiation, not enough time to spending through dilemma. Therefore, factory management will pursue dreadfully until they get better result in garment production and quality level achievement through new practice policy.
- ❖ As garment business predominantly deals export-import activities, monetary conflicts are very usual owing to goods delivery failure or product quality failure, therefore garment factory often faces head-on and hard negotiation with buyers or suppliers due to imposing discount, compensation or product cancellation matters. In such business sensitive issues, matter of huge financial amount involvement even the question of business entity

sometimes, compromising style is the most satisfactory and suitable tool for both parties that really helps a lot to survive in business market. Causing of any goods cancelation due to any critical reason raised from ultimate customers' side, buyer and garment manufacturing company could share the total amount with a mutual and compromising attitude. This style of conflict handling with considering and co-operating mind and business attitude, is encouraging for future sustainable business relationship. In a critical situation where time is very short to take decision, both parties consider the overall business situation with the goal of final product shipment and earning money from bulk sales to ultimate customers, which helps to be compromising both of them and thus dissolve the conflict quickly.

❖ In the sense of team work which is essential for garment factory fully engaged by immense operational tasks and moves, collaborating conflict management style is perfectly match which demands the strong coordination among the working teams and partners following a high level of cooperation and collaboration environment. The ultimate goal is to establish satisfaction in all department managers, and buyers and material suppliers by respecting each other's positional opinion. To meet such comprehensive goal, collaborating style requires enough time to evolve the management system and procedures making through a plain power level platform for all managers working in the factory. As all departments' (merchandising, production, industrial engineering, admin, store, maintenance….) ultimate objective is to conduct on-time product shipment maintaining right quality level, for the sake of this objective, everyone helps each other and involve consciously not to fail anywhere in the chain of work even no matter if it is not concerning for any particular department or not. It could happens by ensuring a strong but easy communication channel and having scope of frequently direct meeting in order to reach the most beneficial decision all together. Therefore, the individual relationship among the managers, buyers, and suppliers is the key factor of success, the more individual relationship among the managers in a garment factory the less conflict occurs entire the work process, and thus more successful business achievement comes in a sustainable way.

To choosing conflict management style it is important to check following aspects of the conflicting issue:

- Significance of the issue
- Consequence of the issue
- Available time to spend upon the issue
- Time constraint of the issue dissolve
- Working environment and platform of the issue
- Consequences of conflict management failure in garment factory
- Employees' job dissatisfaction
- Job stress of staffs
- Productivity lessening
- Deteriorating health condition of employees
- Growing discomfort in social relationship within the factory premises
- Worker/staff turnover
- Declining business turnover going through hard relationship with buyers and suppliers.

1.5. Conflict management process in garment manufacturing company

Conflict is always regarded as dynamic process to the management specialists. Unlike other organizations' practice a sequential steps is proposed below which is particularly effective for garment manufacturing units:

- Rapid system of information collection and processing wherever and whenever any conflict arises in the company.
- Consider and declare the situation as 'conflict' without any ignorance.
- Assessment and evaluation of conflict by all parties' participation.
- Group discussion for existing opinions.
- Solve the issue if possible through a mutual understanding, or ask for potential solutions.
- Fix or amend the existing SOP.
- Review the functional significance of new SOP implementation and further modification if necessary.

1.6. Tips/strategies for conflict management:

- Acknowledge the problem (listen to the issue, it may not be trivial to employees).
- Initiate for proper investigation and evaluation to gather accurate information.
- Listen completely from all parties- workers, managers, suppliers, buyers.

- Be decisive for action towards the solution.
- Ensure the participation of all parties in discussion.
- Establish the practice of rational judgments over small conflicts creating inside the factory.
- Take initiative for SOP set up/ amendment for future moments, and keep monitoring and follow-up the latest SOP.

Counselling is the most pragmatic and effective tool to retain conflicts in factory within a tolerance level. There should be assigned effective persons in different stage and different level of positions, or from outsourcing, who can play the modest role of training and counselling continuously to different groups of employees or underneath departments.

2. Conflict Resolution Skills and Attributes

How to reduce conflict management in a garment factory by improving soft skills? Factory management can focus to some relevant skills development through following effective trainings and counselling programs, which could help to bring efficiency in conflict management practice (Liam, 2024);

- Communication skill
- Problem solving and decision making skill
- Patience and positivity skill
- Negotiation skill
- Group discussion
- Town hall meetings

Employees of a garment factory, to be the great contributor of conflicts reduction process, are suggested to concentrate on achieving some important attributes:

- Self-assessment power
- Perception and beliefs (to organization's policies and practices)
- Empathy
- Trust and ethics
- Positive personality
- Rationality
- Motivational power.

2.1. Some dynamic ways to control conflicts in garment factory:

Frequent general meetings- people always choices negative word-of-mouth against someone else who is absent in the moment, as a culture, inconsequential issues and odds turn to conflict in casual gossiping in casual time. This could be barred by facing each other and through verification of the matter with the presence of actual individual or group, therefore frequent general meetings within a group or related groups is tremendously effective to kill conflicts very quickly on the spot.

Proposition of management structure- conflicts between merchandising and production team/production and quality team/ production and admin team….., one common chief of staff is required to control and moderate the conflicted teams and situation, and to align them towards the company's goals and objectives- how to achieve business and social growth.

Removing and replacing conflicted persons- It is the most suitable and convenient way, after proper investigation, to remove the persons from the department who are basically responsible for conflict creation frequently playing negative role habitually and intentionally.

Create a mutual objective against common opposite force- within a garment factory, conflicts between internal departments could be mollified by focusing on a common opposite force like a problematic supplier or any buying QC who are the main reason of creating conflicts among the factory people, thus all parties in factory could come at a single line and establish mutually understanding how to protect themselves from pain and sufferings giving by any external party.

Teambuilding program- Top management commitment, to create a peaceful and comfortable working environment, is the foremost condition whether they really want a smooth and collaborating relationship among the employees or not,

because many garment factory owners/top management believe in philosophy of conflict-fostering inside their company- objective is to create and continue an wobbly competition among the employees that perhaps could enhance productivity and performance (Naqvi and Anjum, 2024) . If not, top management should initiate effective teambuilding program for the managers/team leaders that would lead them all towards a comprehensive relationship. It could be formal trainings, or informal arrangements like; lunch/dinner party, coffee-conference, annual picnic/tour, occasional ceremony, celebration party, which could create a great scope of fellow-feelings and respect among the colleagues and lead them towards a strong bondage that would help to minimize any conflict in the company.

3. Conclusion

Due to maladministration of conflicts, it always causes of disruptions, dissatisfactions and diminishing of productivity (Shehu-Usman et al., 2024). Conflict management, not a one-time goal, is a system with continuous process that should be established through a long-term practice only. As garment factories are full of different levels of employees, a sustainable conflict management system is necessary for smooth operation, otherwise management might have to spend even full time upon conflicts resolution. Not only rhetoric power or resolution system, specific skills (communication, problem solving, decision making, negotiation, and group discussion) (Liam, 2024), and attributes (positivity, empathy, rationality, self-assessment, and motivation) are important factors to be achieved by employees, by which a garment factory can proceed for a durable and effective conflict management system (Kilag et al., 2024). Following the guidelines of this study top management of garment factories can control their conflicting issues by motivating and training the employees, and by constructing an active conflict management system.

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