FRUSTRATION OF EMPLOYEES: REASONS, DIMENSIONS AND RESOLVING TECHNIQUES

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ABSTRACT

This article ‘Employee Frustration Handling through Frustration Model’ has reflected a very insightful perception of the author as well as the facts of regular scenario of the employees’ mental state of any organization. The topic has reflected and covered the areas of the frustration of employees throughout their work lives, the reasons behind this frustration, the dimensions, the processes, development state and handling techniques of frustration. This article has revealed the pain of being frustrated and also has provided some guidelines, discussed about techniques in an individual level as well as in a social, organizational level that an organization and managers must do to prevent and handle frustration of the employees, viewing the entire issue from human rights angle. One example/case study has been described using the frustration-handling model along with describing the main concepts with examples.

Field of Research:

1. Introduction:

Human beings are compiled with tons of emotions. These Emotions can be of happiness, of depression, of sorrow, of anxiety, of love, of frustration and of various other kinds of mental states. Employees of any organization are human beings who work to contribute in the economic system of the nation, of the world and to improve individual lifestyle, living standards. In a word, employees of any organization are considered as working tools by the organization.

Human beings being working tools cannot avoid emotions and therefore, employees deal with their emotions in their working life as well, influenced by individual perceptions, ideologies, beliefs and concepts. Variations of these thoughts often lead employees to various conflicts. And conflict can result in internal anxiety, peer tension, unhealthy working atmosphere and ultimately frustration. There are several conflicts that arise in any organization either in an Inter personal level or in an intra personal level. An employee struggles to survive in an organization to go through these conflicts, handle these in a professional manner to get rid of any sort of conflicts as well as to keep the working environment conflict-free and healthy.

Many factors and reasons are related to this employee frustration. These factors are important to be chalked out at first, to be understood properly and to be minimized or effaced gradually from the working atmosphere. When percentage of frustrated employees arises in an organization, the organization takes measure to minimize the intensity because it is an alarming situation for any organization.
What is Frustration?

Frustration is a state of mind which leads one to such a blockage that is captured by all negative vibrations of emotion. Any individual experiencing something completely opposite to her/his wants or desires can get into deep frustration. Frustration also occurs whenever an individual is forced to respond to something that the individual wishes to avoid.

Frustration is one with which each of us has had personal, and perhaps agonizing, experience. Anyone who has ever been beset by needless anxiety and has been prevented by perceived psychological barriers from fulfilling the promise of his or her personal dignity and integrity should read this book. Frustration, a complex emotional state, erupts when we face an impediment. (Dr. Knaus, How to Conquer your frustration)

Webster's Collegiate Dictionary defines frustration as "a deep chronic sense or state of insecurity and dissatisfaction arising from unresolved problems." However, to define frustration adequately requires expanding the meaning of this concept through the use of a process definition.

Frustration versus Humane Values:

In today’s world, most of the organizations treat employees only as working machines rather than evaluating human beings as human beings. Frustration occurs when human values are not valued, when humans are only treated as revenue earning tools, when humans are considered only as resources.

Reasons of Frustration:

a. Frustrations, Irritations, and Annoyances:

Human beings get annoyed when something noxious recurs or someone behaves offensively. (Dr. Knaus, How to Conquer your frustration) In the organization arena, employees’ behavior can be a core reason of being irritate and frustrated. In an organization a difficult boss, non-supporting co-workers and obligatory rules may frustrate the employees because it impedes the wish for freedom from annoyance. Continuous irritation provokes and anger is generated gradually towards such motivators. Difficult supervisors who do not want to appreciate by any means, difficult co-workers who wish to make perilous traps with their behavior, attitude for an individual employee to survive instigates irritation, annoyances and finally frustration in that individual. If it continues you might perceive the whole work atmosphere as exasperating. Sometimes recurrent stresses and tensions build up to a boiling point, and paroxysm is observed a paroxysm (a sudden violent outburst of emotion) directed at the source of annoyance, irritation, and frustration.

Exp: an employee named ‘Mr.X’ has been working in a team named ‘MIS’ for several years and has been working really hard to get into a better position, but his supervisor ‘Mr.Y’ is a difficult one, who does not appreciate Mr.X’s works the way he should have rather Mr. Y demeans his sub-ordinate and acts in a very difficult manner. This attitude of the supervisor creates an extreme annoyance and irritation in Mr. X and its continuous approach makes him frustrated at one point.

b. Frustrations: Threat and Conflict:
Frustration arises due to various conflicts in the working atmosphere. Threats and conflicts also get overlapped with frustration in many cases.

I. In threat conditions, something challenges the individual's integrity or basic drives. Exp: If an employee named ‘Mr. Z’ is questioned with her/his skills at work, it is a major insult or challenge to individual’s core integrity.

II. In conflict, the person faces opposing forces. Whichever way he moves, he risks unwanted consequences. Exp: If an employee named ‘Ms. T’ has to deal with a biased supervisor on one hand and on the other hand peers are not even supporting kind, the employee gets into a suffocation feeling and gets frustrated.

**Conflict Conditions:** Psychological theorist Kurt Lewin described several conflict conditions. These are:

1. **Conflicts between two desirable alternatives**
   A capable candidate can only choose one job among two alluring job offers, whereas the candidate has got aspiration for both. Exp: Mr. X got offer from Grameenphone as well as from BAT with same salary, position and package, here Mr. X needs to decide which one to choose.

2. **Conflicts between two undesirable alternatives**
   An employee has to join the one to one session with her/his supervisor whereas she/he hates to be in the session for the discussion again she/he cringes at the thought that his supervisor would score her/him negatively if she/he doesn’t attend the session. Exp: Mr. X unwillingly attends the one-to-one session with his supervisor ‘Mr. Y’.

3. **Conflicts between simultaneously desirable and undesirable alternatives**
   An employee wishes for a transfer to the regional office due to an aspiration of getting more authority and freedom of work however, the feeling of working in a regional office also reduces the current benefits of her/his working at the head office in the main city. Exp: Mr. X wishes to get a transfer from Dhaka Office to Rangpur Office in the suburbs in a higher position, knowing that other benefits will not be available over there.

Thus, conflict has the potential for producing frustration because each conflict situation contains both an obstacle and a choice.

**Frustration Processes:** ([Dr. Knaus, How to Conquer your frustration])

1. Frustrations exist when our wants, wishes, and desires get thwarted or interrupted. The feeling results from disparities between what we want and what we find available. For example, when our level of aspiration exceeds our level of achievement we will likely experience frustration.
2. Frustrations can range from imperceptible to powerful.
3. Frustration starts from a feeling of discomfort.
4. Frustrations start within oneself because of the thought of what and how impediments can arise.
5. Strong frustrations result in mixed emotional states that have a disorganizing effect on memory and behavior.
6. Depending upon interpreting the feelings of frustration, stimulation occur of positive change, aggression, regression, complacency, or compulsive behavior.

Development of Frustration:

Few minor dissatisfaction issues, disagreements, anxieties, assault and various negative factors arises before the conflict situation turns out to be in a frustrated situation.

Whenever Latent Conflict gets prominent conflict awareness arises and whenever conflict awareness gets important frustration occurs. Latent Conflict arises when individuals (employees) keep the conflict issues inside her/him, avoidance, isolation, denial and self-centered behavior gets prominent. In the maximum point of Latent conflict, conflict awareness arises where employees complain, gets stressed, provides negative opinions and gets in a mode of accomplishing the awareness against conflicts. And when, this stage also reaches its maximum point, frustration occurs, where we can see severe negativism, over sensitivity and severe withdrawal.

When severe frustration occurs employees start disagreeing and if disagreement becomes prominent, assault can even occur.

Exp: In a very reputed Telco company of Bangladesh, the drivers & third party employees once protested for their rights regarding salary and increments. They have been deprived of a proper salary for quite a long time and therefore frustration caught them in core and gradually, they started opposing, disagreeing with the views of top management and finally during their protest, the drivers assaulted few top managers of the company for their ruthless and irrational behavior.
**Categories of Frustration:** Frustration can be segmented into two new categories: process and episode

1. **Process Frustration:** A process frustration occurs when a person continuously feels blocked in a major area of life, such as learning, work, or love.
   Exp: Not enough salary and benefits at work creates the frustration in Mr. X.

2. **Episode Frustration:** An episode frustration consists of a temporary impeding problem or condition. (Dr. Knaus, *How to Conquer your frustration*)
   Exp: Initially Mr. X was happy at work, but gradually his supervisor’s inconsistent, irrational and biased behavior made him unhappy and gradually frustration caught him in the process.

**Levels of Frustrations:** Frustration has 5 basic dimensions and layers.

1. **Aggression:** Whenever, the frustration gets into the psychological core sphere and it becomes quite impossible to get rid of it rather it overpowers everything else, the individual may be in a aggressive mode of frustration.

   **Frustration and Aggression:** In early 1960s, psychology researchers and clinicians actively studied the relationship between frustration and aggression. It is believed that frustration leads to aggression. However, the frustration-aggression model is both too sweeping and too simple. Leonard Berkowitz, proposed some focus points to understand this model.

   **The focus Points Are:**
   1. Aggressor’s Intentions
   2. Attitude
   3. Learning
   4. Interpretation of emotional reaction

   Exp: Mr. X, horribly annoyed and frustrated on his supervisor’s behavior and speeches thus he starts arguing with him on every topic.

2. **Withdrawal:** If the frustration gets into a phase of irritation of extreme repugnance then it may turn into a withdrawal state. Exp: Mr. X, horribly upset with his supervisor’s biased behavior feels a sheer hatred towards him and thus withdraws to take any sort of input from him and tries to stay reluctant at work.
3. **Rationalization**: When the individual is aware of thy frustration and looks for an alternative path for way out of this frustration, it gets lead to a positive mode and it is called rationalization. Exp: Mr. X looking for a new job.

4. **Compromise**: However, when individuals think of rationally to deal with it in a positive or negative or in a reluctant manner the frustration modes can be of rationalization or compromise. Exp: Mr. X stays negative but attends work by compromising with self realization and tries to cope up with the supervisor’s demand but with less effort.

5. **Fixation**: Finally, if an individual wants to fix or solve the frustration issue then it is said to be that the frustration layers have already been crossed and it is in a state of completion or getting over with it. Exp: Mr. X wishes to quit the job, even if he cannot find another one at the moment.

**Frustration Model:**

1. **Need**: *(Desire to Have a Promising Career with a good salary in the beginning)*
2. **Drive**: *(Wish to receive a good salary along with increments, get a promotion)*
3. **Barrier**: *(Frequent Policy Change in the Organization)*
4. **Goal**: *(CEO of Grameenphone Company)*

**Behavioral Pattern of the employees**

According to The Frustration Model, the behavioral patterns of the employees of any organization can be explained during their inter-personal conflicts. By this Model we have known that there are five basic behavioral patterns of the employees that can be detected during their different level of frustrations during these conflicts.

Frustration occurs whenever the smooth mental or psychological thoughts flow is blocked in such a way that the person instead of staying motivated gets annoyed and completely unenthusiastic about the entire matter. These barriers that create blockage and obstructions can be in various ways – both in physical and in psychological or mental way.

Here in terms of any Organization & its various polices, I want to present a case where an employee can be demotivated to severe level and finally can get frustrated in various ways.
Case Study/ Example that signifies the level of Frustration in a rightful manner:

Suppose, an Employee, Ms. X who joined in a well known Telco Company, as an executive right after her/his graduation, has an urge to prove thy self and feels that need to get developed soon and reach to her/his final goal. This is the initial step where the employee feels a need to prove her/his qualities, potentials & integrity to you & to the management. When this employee is slightly appreciated or recognized for her/his work, she/he feels a drive to thrive for more. She/ He would require some extra benefits with good amount of KPI / performance Bonus along with some sound amount of increments. Also she/ he would wish to have a promotion in a good position.

Her/His final destination would be to hold a top position / a management level of position from where she/he can lead the entire organization with her/his perceptions and ways. But, here the hindrances occur, and The Barrier can be the ‘Organization’s Frequent Policy Changes’ like when the employee Ms. X, suppose joined the company , her/his knew if he works hard & proves himself as a potential employee of the company then she/he would be promoted within a year.

However, Inspite of Ms.X’s dedication & sincerity at work, if she/he has not been promoted after a year then she/he would feel this as an extreme barrier to reach to his goal , which is ‘The topmost position or CEO of the company’. Due to this Barrier five kinds of frustrations may occur among the employees, which are discussed through the below model:

1. Aggression
2. Withdrawal
3. Rationalization
4. Compromise
5. Fixation
Handling Anger and Frustration at Work: Recommendations

Malcolm Forbes said, “Work without conflict is a hobby.” There can be effective ways of minimizing conflict and managing work relationships then employees would have a healthy relationship inside the organization. The main objective of this module is to help organizations, managers and employees handle anger and frustration at work.

Anger and frustration at work can be handled by:
- Increasing understanding of the basic causes of anger and frustration in the workplace
- Providing tools for dealing effectively with them
- Managing work relations to minimize the occurrence of anger and frustration in the workplace
- Treating employees as human beings and maintaining humane values

My recommendations are of handling anger & frustration of the employees can be divided into two main sectors:
1. Pre Frustration or Prevention
2. Post Frustration of Conflict Management

1. Pre Frustration or Prevention: Management should take measures beforehand to keep the conflicts in a minimized format so that employees do not get de-motivated or frustrated. There are three ways:

   I. Aligning Human resource policies with Human rights UDHR and ILO
      a. Re-furnish the Human resource management policies
      b. Inclusion of UDHR & ILO to secure Human rights at work
         Exp: Company ABC revises the Human Resource policies and gives priority to employees’ mental state and needs.

   II. Building up Human relationships by healthy communication
      a. No job overlapping should exist at work place
      b. Freedom of ownership must be given
      c. Free flow of information exchanging must exist
      d. Proper scope for career growth should be provided
         Exp: Company ABC designs the job descriptions carefully, provides employees the necessary flexibility and freedom to grow individual’s career.

   III. Assigning appropriate managers with humane quality and analytical thinking capability
      a. Do not appoint selfish managers
      b. Do not appoint managers with less confidence or superior confidence in thyself
      c. Do not appoint managers who can be biased
      d. Do not appoint managers who doesn’t have enough knowledge about the job
      e. Appoint managers with soft-skills and good communication skill mainly
      f. Appoint managers who can protect sub-ordinate’s rights
      g. Appoint managers who create the work place ‘like home environment’
         Exp: Company ABC has discarded the managers who cannot deal with human relationships properly.

2. Post Frustration or Conflict Management: Management should manage conflict in a positive and effective manner. Conflict management can be done in three ways:

   I. Categorizing the conflicts
      a. Task oriented
      b. Supervisor / Co-workers oriented
      c. Personal Emotion oriented
         Exp: Company ABC and its Management identifies the conflict issues and resolves those.

   II. Appointing Counselor or Psychologist
      a. Sessions to ventilate the anger /frustration
      b. Suggestions of employees taken into account
         Exp: Company ABC hires experts like psychologists or counselors to deal with the conflict situation instead of going to hard line.

   III. Manage frustrations at individual level (when controlling the outside environment becomes difficult it’s better to apply these principles on self.)
      a. Build the body to withstand the stress of multiple frustrations.
      b. Liberate the mind so that we can remain alert to opportunities and utilize resources
      c. Change the pattern(s) that promote needless frustrations.
      d. Don’t stay stuck in a rut or repeat counterproductive actions.
Exp: Mr. X keeps all the frustrations and agony regarding work to a separate side of his brain and works on his self developments, desires, dreams to overlook and manage his frustration at work.

Corporate Case Study and my Recommendation

In recent days the leading Telco Company of Bangladesh and its employees are going through this frustration mode. Due to company strategy, downsizing of employees has become an obvious factor, thus scale backing has taken place inside the company. However, employees became quite frustrated and got severely de-motivated for company’s follow up processes of these certain downsizing policies. Employees therefore, protested in various forms to disclose their sheer abhorrence towards the management and to alleviate the pain, problems occurred due to the pre-decided set standards in their regular flow of lives. The company is struggling to handle this ongoing frustration and employees are struggling, fighting to let go off their frustration. In this scenario, both of the parties are dealing with each other in an ‘aggression’ mode, as discussed in the above model. However, If I provide my suggestions in here then I would have liked to tell both the parties to deal with each other in a more ‘Rationalization’ and ‘Fixation’ mode without being reluctant to each others’ perceptions. Initiatives that can be taken are:

1. Finding out root causes of conflict
2. Looking for Conflict settlement approaches
3. Creating ‘Reception and acceptance formula’
4. Being humanitarian and give importance to human rights issues
5. Being respectful with proper clarification, transparency and justification towards each other
6. Pointing out particular measures for ‘resolving tensions, soothing frustrations and handling conflict situations’
7. Being SMART to implement the above discussed methods

Conclusion

Every organization must take initiatives to handle employees’ frustrations by dealing with those in an appropriate manner. The frustration must be handled in a prevention level or in a very early stage of post frustration level before letting it to get worse. Employees’ frustration not only reduces the healthy life of an individual but also decreases the revenue growth of the company, declines the economic growth of a country and creates a cluttered scenario in the global business world.
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