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Analytical Study on Employee's Conflicts, Its Effects and the Prospective Solutions in Knitwear Industry of Faisalabad

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Abstract: The conflict at workplace may appear due to the differences in opinions and choices between two or more employees which is a common phenomenon in mass intensive manufacturing industry. The purpose of the current research study is to chalk out the reasons and the effects of employee conflicts at the workplace in knitwear industry and that how it can be detrimental with severe consequences in terms of impaired productivity and also to suggest the prospective solutions. While carrying out research primary data was collected from the managers, middle managers and lower level managers working in knitwear industries. The questionnaire technique was used as a research tool to collect the primary data. The data obtained from this research was analyzed statistically by using SPSS package and interpreted as recommendations and suggestions. Crocbatch alpha, chi square, descriptive statistics tests were applied to measure the association of variables. The results of research study revealed that attitude variable had highly significant effect; whereas communication and HR Policies variables were found having significant effects.

Keywords: Chi square, crobatch alpha, employee conflict, productivity, workplace

INTRODUCTION

Conflict management has been modified into an important sub field of organizational behavior over the little period of time (Kozan, 1997). Conflict is a state of opposition, disagreement or incompatibility among persons, or groups due to differences over goals, ideas, interests or objectives. It is natural and inevitable part of all human social relationships (Sandole and Sandole-Staroste, 1987). Every organization encounters conflicts on a daily basis and it is necessary to follow the indicators continuously that lead to their presence. In organizations communication, organization structure and factors of personal variables can be the potential sources of conflicts (Dreu *et al*., 2001).

Dynamics of conflict: In order to define the dynamics of development of conflict, different researchers adopted different classifications. The common concept among all of them is that conflict passes through a chain of phases. It starts from Beginning of Conflict, Development and End with dissimilar intensity scale. Brahm (2003) defines seven phases of conflict dynamic in his research (Fig. 1). The phases of conflict appearance go in the following manner; starts from the existence of a latent conflict, followed by emergence, escalation, stalemate, conflict de-escalation and ending with settlement and the post-conflict peace building as the last stage.

Latent conflict: Appears whenever individuals, groups, or organizations have differences.

At emergence stage conflict starts being observed. Once the sum of differences or annoyances keeps on developing, a disagreement explodes ultimately. The latent conflict is the kind of conflict that may have inactive existence.

Escalation refers to increasing intensity of the conflict and consequently increases in the severity of applied strategies. Conflict tends to involve more people and other related problems at escalation stage. At this stage parties start using their powers and resources to raise their pressures and to impose unkind permit.

Deadlock or Stalemate stage appears when conflict escalates. In this stage parties recognize that they cannot be successful or get everything they want, yet they do not want to go on back foot. Parties begin to run without resources and tactics.

De-Escalation is the stage when eventually conflicts begin coming down and changes shape. The involved parties start changing their view points and stances which is because of external forces changing in perspectives or with time. Parties begin realizing that their goals are dubious and start changing them for realistic solutions.

At Resolution stage parties begin to look for resolution of their problems. At this stage grievances

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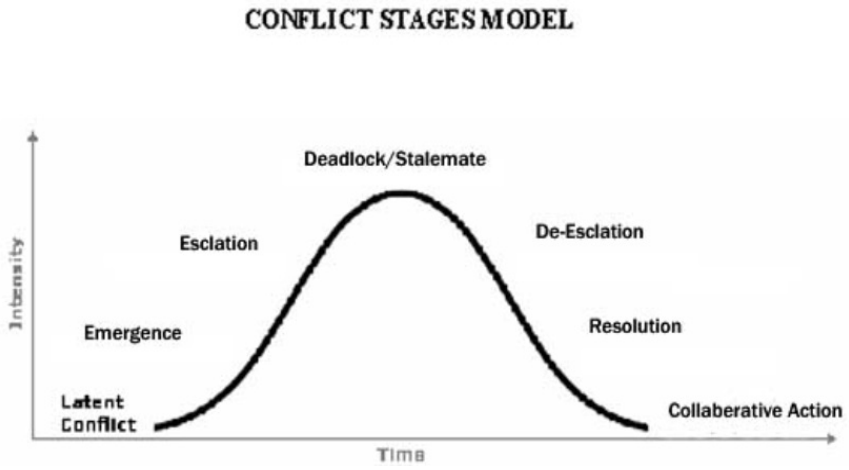

Fig. 1: Life cycle of a conflict by Quelle: Brahm (2003)

are usually reduced. Both parties begin to look for substitutes to resolve their conflicts. Finally the acceptable resolutions are established among the parties.

At Collaborative Action stage the parties begin to work together to implement the resolution strategies and at level parties begin to work together to implement the resolution and begin to strengthen their understanding, communication and relationship with each other.

In another work Rapport (1960), suggests more classic work using the approach of three-model typology of conflict relations:

- The Debate strategy involves attempts to convince and convert the opponents
- The Games strategy involves attempts to outsmart the opponents
- At Fights strategy parties attempt to damage or raze the opponent

Alker *et al*. (2001), in their Conflict Early Warning System project (CEWS) related researches developed their conflict dynamic model. The model was consisted of six phases:

- At Dispute Phase opposing claims are expressed through existing institutional processes.
- In Crisis phase although opposition uses existing institutional processes but their exchange with violence are highly threatened.
- At Limited violence phase, legality or effectiveness of institutional processes is doubted. At this stage systematic using force is considered fair.
- The massive violence phase is defined as use of force systematically and carelessly. At this stage peaceful settlements are usually not adopted.
- The abatement phase refers to the temporary suspension of opposition and use of aggression.

Finally the Settlement phase involves the resolution of difference and development of mutually agreed institutional processes.

That conflict literature generally describes the conflict's dynamic circle as principally composed of tension, escalation, de-escalation and settlement phases. This is called classical model of a conflict-dynamics. However the important fact is that these four basic phases do not go after each other necessarily.

Conflict issues: Weber (1947) refers conflict issues in his research. There could be number of causes over which two parties may go into conflict. However money, power, prestige could be the potential causes:

- The political conflict can be understood by perceiving it as the entity and the issue of the conflict. It is also not possible to accomplish conflict resolution without understanding its causes and issues of the conflict. The important issue for what objects parties in conflict argues and what worth is at stake (Deutsch, 1994). The social scientists and researchers identify and elaborate five basic issues which could be potential cause of conflict. The sequence of this process goes as following: control over resources, values, beliefs, preferences and annoyances or the nature of the relationship. With reference to conflict causes and issues Singer (1996) points out that the usual suspects could be found in territory, ideology, dynastic authority, religion, language, ethnicity, self determination, resources, markets, dominance, equality and revenge. Pfetsch and Rohloff (2000) in their researches on conflict identified nine sources. These sources have historically been proved as the common conflict related issues which exist between the states territory, secession, decolonization, autonomy, system, national power, regional predominance, international power, resources etc.

Objectives of the study: The objectives of the current study are as following:

- To identify the nature of employee conflicts
- To explore its effects on work environment
- To propose the viable solutions

Delimitations: The data collected from 117 managers, middle managers and supervisors of knitwear organizations through questionnaire tool. The data was collected from knitwear organizations located in Faisalabad so that research results could be exhaustive and comprehensive with respect to the specific geographical location. The voluntarily willing employees were selected to collect the data. The industries selected were of top, medium and low level of size in respect of their market share.

METHODOLOGY

Methodology is an essential part of any research study as it provides a guideline to future researchers to evaluate any study to verify its results. The main objective of this chapter is to explain the relationship among different independent variables with the dependent variables. For this purpose, various tools and techniques will be used right from data collection to data analysis, explaining relationship between and within the variables is essential to the study.

Study area/universe: Data was collected from following knitwear industries located in Faisalabad district: Kamal Hosiery Mills, MTM and Kalash Hosiery. These knitwear industries were selected on part of their production volume levels from high, medium to low so that a representative sample of the industry could be collected.

Sample size and sampling method: The study was carried out on total 117 respondents from three hosiery industries. Thirty nine respondents were selected from each hosiery industry from top, middle and bottom levels of management by using probability sampling method. Because many of the characteristics of population are on average same, hence the Systematic Random Sampling Technique was adopted for the data collection was found as the best available sampling method. Due to homogeneity of population, Simple Random Sampling method was used but to get varied information the process was gone through the systematic manner. Systematic sampling consists of selecting every k^{th} sampling unit after the first sampling unit is selected at random from the first k sampling units (Nachmias and Chavez, 1992).

Data collection instrument: A well structured comprehensive questionnaire was established to collect data from respondents in hosiery industry. Alam (2002) stated that Questionnaire is a carefully formulated document to collect data from large, diverse and widely scattered group of people. It is sometimes considered as the single method or tool for data collection.

Data collection procedure: Before proceeding to the field for actual data collection, it was necessary to test the validity and workability of the interviewing schedule. Pre-testing was done on 10 respondents. Necessary modification and changes were made in order to have required information. The questionnaire was administered personally by the researcher to collect the data from selected hosiery industries. The questionnaire was mainly prepared in English language along with Urdu translation for convenient understanding of respondents.

Field experience: The main difficulty that researcher experienced was hesitation by some of the respondents in sharing of information asked in questionnaire. The researcher had to assure them that the information would be kept confidential and their identity would not be exposed in the research report. Moreover, they were realized the importance of information revealed by them.

Scaling (scoring): The response of the interviews on the value statements were recorded using the rating scale. The rating scale is used whenever respondents are asked to make a judgment in terms of sets of ordered categories (Nachmias and Chavez, 1992). These are the following response categories i.e., strongly agree somehow agree, neither Agree nor disagree, somehow disagree, strongly disagree. In order to quantify the responses, Likert Scale technique was used through assigning certain scoring to each of the response.

RESULT ANALYSIS

Quantitative data was analyzed by using SPSS Statistical Package for Social Sciences. Descriptive statistical analysis that included means, frequencies, percentages and standard deviations were used to analyze and describe different variables.

Crobatch alpha, p-value, Chi Square and Gamma tests were also applied to find out the relationship and degree of association between dependent and independent variables.

Frequency distribution: The data is coded and prepared for automatic processing and analysis at this stage. In order to examine the pattern of responses frequency distribution is constructed to each of the independent and dependent variables under investigation. A frequency distribution of a single variable sometimes referred to as a univariate frequency distribution. It is the frequency of observations in each category of a variable.

To construct a frequency distribution researchers simply list the categories of the variable and count the

Table 1: Demographic analysis

Items	Frequency	(%)
Designation		
Top manager	29	29.9
Middle manager	31	32.0
Bottom manager	37	38.1
Age (in years)		
20-25	16	16.5
26-30	34	35.1
31-35	30	30.9
36-40	14	14.4
Above 40	3	3.1
Education		
Secondary	9	9.3
Higher secondary	20	20.6
Graduation	40	41.2
Post-graduation	26	26.8
Above	2	2.1
Background		
Rural	42	43.3
Urban	55	56.7
Income		
Less than 10000	23	23.7
10000-20000	31	32.0
20001-30000	20	20.6
30001-60000	18	18.6
Above 60000	5	5.2

number of observations in each. It provides the standard form of a univariate frequency distribution.

Table 1 presents the designation of the respondents. About 29.9% of the respondents were top manager, while about one-third i.e., 32.0% of them were middle manager and 38.1% of them were bottom manager. Second section of Table depicts that 16.5% of the respondents belonged to age group 20-25 years, while little more than one-third i.e., 35.1% of them had 26-30 years of age and 30.9% of them had 31-35 years of age. About 14.4% of the respondents had 36-40 years of age and remaining 3.1% of the respondents had above 40 years of age. The results indicate that majority of the respondents' belonged to young age groups. Third part of Table presents the educational level of the respondents. Only 9.3% of the respondents had education at secondary level, while about one-fifth i.e., 20.6% of them had higher secondary level of education and a major proportion i.e., 41.2% of them were graduate. About one-fourth i.e., 26.8% of the respondents were post-graduate and 2.1% of them had above post-graduate level of education. The data reflects that educational level was high among the sampled respondents. Fourth part of table shows that 43.3% of the respondents had rural background, whereas a majority i.e., 56.7% of them was from urban background. Fifth part of table indicates that 23.7% of the respondents had less than Rs. 10000 monthly income, while about one-third i.e., 32.0% of the respondents had Rs. 10000-20000 monthly income and about one-fifth i.e., 20.6% of them had 20001-30000 monthly income. About 18.6% of the respondents had Rs. 30001-60000 and remaining 5.2% of the respondents had above Rs. 60000 monthly incomes. So majority of the respondents had Rs. 10000-30000 monthly income.

Table 2 shows that 9.3% of the respondents were strongly agreed and a majority i.e., 54.6% of them was agreed with the opinion "organization's selection procedure helps to select right candidate". About 18.6% of the respondents were disagreed. A considerable no. of respondents was agreed i.e., 47.4% with the opinion that "the organization gives promotion opportunity to its employees on higher rank vacancies than hiring from outside". Whereas 10.3% of the respondents were neutral, about one-fifth i.e., 20.6% of them were disagreed. About 47.4% of respondents were agreed with the opinion "The organization provides equal opportunity for selection", whereas 22.7% of them were disagreed. Majority of the respondents were agreed that the organization's selection procedure helps to select right candidate and the organization gives promotion opportunity to its employees on higher rank vacancies than hiring from outside.

Table 3 reveals that 10.3% of the respondents were strongly agreed and a major proportion i.e., 45.4% of them were agreed with the opinion "Authorities try to solve immediately when employees discuss their work constraints" Whereas 17.5% of them were disagreed and. A majority i.e., 54.6% of respondents was agreed with the opinion "Employees have easy access with senior management to convey information about their work related problems". About 9.3% of the respondents were strongly agreed and 23.7% were agreed with the statement "You are not given complete information by your incharge, to fulfill your task accurately" Whereas A major proportion i.e., 44.3% of them was disagreed. A majority i.e., 63.9% of respondents was agreed with the statement "Employees are given detailed briefing about product standards before they are given new task". A huge majority i.e., 61.9% of them were agreed with the statement "Employees clearly know the time line needed to complete their task". A major proportion i.e., 46.4% of respondents was agreed with the statement "There is regular meeting schedule for employees to discuss their work related problems" Whereas 11 21.6% of them were disagreed. A major proportion i.e., 44.3% of respondents were agreed with the statement "The planning department defines targets well on time to all departments". About 11.3% of the respondents were strongly agreed and a major proportion i.e., 43.3% of them was agreed with the statement "Two different managers give you instructions about your task".

Table 2: Response analysis against HR policies' dimensions

HR policies	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Organization's selection procedure helps to select right candidate	6.2	18.6	11.3	54.6	9.3
Organization gives promotion opportunity to its employees on higher rank vacancies than hiring from outside	14.4	20.6	10.3	47.4	7.2
Organization provides equal opportunity for selection	11.3	22.7	13.4	47.4	5.2

Table 3: Response analysis against communication dimensions

Communication	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Authorities try to solve immediately when employees discuss their work constraints	11.3	17.5	15.5	45.4	10.3
Employees have easy access with senior management to convey information about their work related problems	3.1	7.2	11.3	54.6	23.7
You are not given complete information by your incharge, to fulfill your task accurately	15.5	44.3	7.2	23.7	9.3
Employees are given detailed briefing about product standards before they are given new task	8.2	7.2	5.2	63.9	15.5
Employees clearly know the time line needed to complete their task	8.2	8.2	7.2	61.9	14.4
There is regular meeting schedule for employees to discuss their work related problems	6.2	21.6	11.3	46.4	14.4
The planning department defines targets well on time to all departments	12.4	17.5	16.5	44.3	9.3
Two different managers give you instructions about your task	10.3	32.0	3.1	43.3	11.3

Table 4: Response analysis against attitude dimensions

Attitude	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
You are not in comfort in meetings	9.3	42.3	17.5	24.7	6.2
There is complete harmony between you and your super-ordinate on organization objectives	7.2	28.9	10.3	43.3	10.3
Most of the times your supervisor rejects your opinion	15.5	36.1	18.6	26.8	3.1

Table 5: Response analysis of employee conflict dimensions

Employees conflict	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Conflict affects organization productivity	3.1	7.2	7.2	54.6	27.8
Conflict among employees at work place affects product quality	3.1	14.4	12.4	53.6	16.5
Differences with your colleagues at workplace affect your own efficiency	6.2	13.4	13.4	54.6	12.4
Difference in opinion with your colleagues in performing a task causes stress to you	9.3	18.6	11.3	43.3	17.5

Table 4 presents that 6.2% of the respondents were strongly agreed and about one-fourth i.e., 24.7% of them were agreed with the statement “you are not in comfort in meetings”. A major proportion i.e., 43.3% of respondents agreed with the statement “There is complete harmony between you and your super-ordinate on organization objectives”. Whereas 28.9% of them were disagreed. Little more than one-fourth i.e., 26.8% of them agreed with the statement “Most of the times your supervisor rejects your opinion”. Whereas 18.6% of the respondents were neutral, 36.1% of them were disagreed and 15.5% of them were strongly disagreed with this statement.

Table 5 shows that 27.8% of the respondents were strongly agreed and a majority i.e., 54.6% of them was agreed with the opinion “Conflict affects organization productivity”. Studies conclude that conflict is negative and hinders the group performance (Brown and Day, 1981). More than a half i.e., 53.6% of them agreed with the statement “Conflict among employees at workplace affects product quality” Whereas 12.4% of the respondents were neutral. About 12.4% of the respondents were strongly agreed with the statesmen “Differences with your colleagues at workplace affect your own efficiency” and a majority i.e., 54.6% of them were agreed. Whereas 13.4% of the respondents were neither agree nor disagree. A major proportion i.e., 43.3% of respondents agreed with the statement “Difference in opinion with your colleagues in performing a task that causes stress to you”.

Bivariate analysis: The investigation of a bivariate relationship is a vital step in explaining and testing the research hypothesis. A relationship of the two variables means that the distributions of values of the two variables are associated. In other words, the variation explained by one variable is patterned in such a manner that its variance is not randomly distributed in connection with other variables. In the context of a bivariate relationship, the problem arises whether a relationship is real or has arisen by chance. A bivariate table is one in which two variables have been cross-classified. It consists of rows and columns. The categories of one variable are labeled for the rows and the categories of the second variable are labeled for the columns (Nachmias and Chavez, 1992). Generally, significance of the relationship is examined by establishing a null hypothesis, in which it is assumed that there is no difference or no relationship between two variables.

Hypothesis 1: Higher the HR policies lower will be the employees’ conflict level: Table 6 presents the association between respondents opinion about recruitment and selection and employees conflict. Chi-square (9.72) shows a significant association between respondents’ opinion about recruitment and selection with employees’ conflict. Gamma value shows a strong negative relationship between the variables. It means that if the respondents have high opinion about the recruitment and selection then their thinking the employees’ conflict is low. Table 6 also shows that those respondents who have low opinion about

Table 6: Association of HR polices and employee conflict

Recruitment and selection	Employees conflict Low	Medium	High	Total
Low	2	13	8	23
	8.7%	56.5%	34.8%	100.0%
Medium	6	22	9	37
	16.2%	59.5%	24.3%	100.0%
High	14	18	5	37
	37.8%	48.6%	13.5%	100.0%
Total	22	53	22	97
	22.7%	54.6%	22.7%	100.0%

Chi-square: 9.72; DF: 4; p-value: 0.045*; Gamma: -0.425; *: Significant

Table 7: Association of communication and employees conflict

Communication	Employees conflict Low	Medium	High	Total
Low	2	7	6	15
	13.3%	46.7%	40.0%	100.0%
Medium	9	24	14	47
	19.1%	51.1%	29.8%	100.0%
High	11	22	2	35
	31.4%	62.9%	5.7%	100.0%
Total	22	53	22	97
	22.7%	54.6%	22.7%	100.0%

Chi-square: 10.20; DF: 4; p-value: 0.037*; Gamma: -0.432; *: Significant

Table 8: Association of attitude and employees conflict

Attitude	Employees conflict Low	Medium	High	Total
Low	2	15	13	30
	6.7%	50.0%	43.3%	100.0%
Medium	10	26	8	44
	22.7%	59.1%	18.2%	100.0%
High	10	12	1	23
	43.5%	52.2%	4.3%	100.0%
Total	22	53	22	97
	22.7%	54.6%	22.7%	100.0%

Chi-square: 17.52; DF: 4; p-value: 0.002**; Gamma: -0.589; **: Highly significant

recruitment and selection have medium (56.5%) and high (34.8%) level about employees' conflict. On the other hand if the respondents have high level opinion about recruitment and selection then respondents have (37.8%) and medium (48.6%) level opinion about employees' conflict. So the hypothesis "Higher the recruitment and selection, lower will be the employees' conflict level" is accepted.

Hypothesis 2: Lower the communication, higher will be the employees' conflict level: Table 7 presents the association between respondents opinion about communication and employees conflict. Chi-square value (10.20) shows a significant association between respondents' opinion about communication and employees' conflict. Gamma value shows a strong negative relationship between the variables. It means if the respondents have low opinion about the communication then their thinking about the employees' conflict is high. Table 8 also shows that those respondents who have low opinion about communication have medium (46.7%) and high (40.0%) level about employee's conflict. On the other hand if the respondents have high level opinion about communication then they have low (31.4%) and medium (62.9%) level opinion about employees' conflict. So the hypothesis "Higher the communication, lower will be the employees conflict level" is accepted.

Hypothesis 3: Higher the attitude of the respondents, lower will be the employees' conflict level: Table 8 presents the association between respondents opinion about attitude and employees conflict. Chi-square (17.52) shows a highly significant association between respondents' opinion about attitude and employees' conflict. Gamma value shows a strong negative relationship between the variables. It means that if the respondents have high opinion about the attitude then their thinking about the employees' conflict is low. The above table also shows that those respondents who have low level opinion about attitude have medium (50.0%) and high (43.3%) level opinion about employees conflict, on the other hand if the respondents have high level opinion about attitude then they have low (43.5%) and medium (52.2%) level opinion about employees' conflict. So the hypothesis "Higher the attitude of the respondents, lower will be the employee's conflict level" is accepted. The current research findings identify that attitude variable in knitwear industry in Faisalabad has its strong existence in relation to presence of employees' conflict.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study exhibits the presence of employee's conflict at knitwear industry of Faisalabad in various aspects. Knitwear sector is stronghold of textile industry which is already been badly affected by local energy crisis, government policies and international garments politics e.g., the imposition of discriminatory anti dumping duties by US and EU on Pakistani textile goods in compare to other countries in south Asian regions. So it's grim need of time to make this sector competitive by improving its internal structure not only in respect of tangible but in respect of intangible factors as well, like employees conflict. These intangible factors are silently pushing this sector out of competitiveness by affecting its performance.

The study reveals that communication distortion is one of major sources of conflicts. So this sector needs to refine its formal and informal communication channels to address the root cause of the problem. The strategies to improve communication are needed to be adopted for free flow of upward, downward and horizontal communications. Training programs for higher management should be conduct repeatedly in order to develop appropriate communication skill set at organization. Managers be trained to adopt communication tools effectively, like emailing, posting, memos, effective group meetings face to face talks,

motivational speeches etc. This will assist organizations to disseminate their visionary objectives more efficiently from top to bottom. This will result in higher corporate efficiency. The production planning and control department in knitwear industry should be very formalized, professional, vigilant and well organized as their on information dissemination and coordination at inter and intra department level can minimize conflicts to an insignificant level. This department within organization can make it possible to make free flow of information vertically and horizontally.

The other variables that are causing conflicts to a great extent are attitude and HR policies. Organizations need to trace roots of problems, conditions and situations linked with development of attitudes leading to workplace conflicts. Also they need to keep eye consistently to have feedback of employee satisfaction in order to avoid such unpleasant situation of poor attitude development that may affect employee as well as organization performance substantially.

The HR policies have vital role in mitigation of work place conflicts. The development of well defined policies and their consistent application will help to align employees and organization objectives and reduction of conflicts of interests. The adoption of HR policies having focus on consistent support aligning their performance with compensation, encouraging conditions leading to development will direct healthy work environment development with satisfied employees.

Knitwear organizations should focus not only on developing technical skills but should also allocate budgets for their employees to learn stress management, communication skills, change managements and conflicts negotiation skills etc., for their better adjustment in varying environment. The organizations must spend on employees regarding their psychological and other health care issues so that they could maintain their focus on their tasks. This resulting positive attitude will result in less conflicting environment at organization.

The government should emphasize on establishing organizations which monitor such behavioral indicators more closely and could recommend preventive measures on precise time. This would help organizations to maintain their competitiveness.

Universities can also play a vital role to get organizations out of such uncertainties. A strong interaction between academy and industry need be developed to have a close and consistent study of conflict related behavioral and structural issues that are affecting organizations productivity and competitiveness. The current research lays foundations of such imperative.

More over measuring employee's conflict with respect to its financial impacts can further help to quantify this research. Also it will help government and textile related industrial bodies to take necessary measures before time, which can minimize the extent of potential disaster.

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