

Work Place Aggression and Role of Leadership

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Abstract

The main purpose of this Research paper is to find and locate the role of Leadership in workplace aggression. I have gone through many of the Literature of Workplace Aggression to find out the behavior of leaders at the workplace aggression takes place. The workplace aggression is the neglected part of any organization to achieve their goals. The managers are not interested in to find out the routes of aggression in the employees to better their performance and provide adequate resources to the employees to make them stress free and concentrate on their job. The study used survey based questionnaire for primary data gathering. A sample size of 20 Customer Services Representatives working in Islamabad and Rawalpindi collected to find out the differences. I researched about some points that what leaders do during the aggression and eventually overcome the loss which is faced by the Organization. The convenience sampling technique was used to generate the data from the employees. This technique is easy and comfortable to use without puzzling the victim. In conclusion I am able to analysis that what Leaders can play role in the aggression and how they focus about the aggression happening in their organization. Either instead of resolving employees' problems the Leadership thinks that the problem should be dealt by the employees themselves or they have time to resolve each employee's issues personally and officially.

Keywords: workplace aggression, organizational behavior, employees issues, workplace issues

Introduction

The definition of Workplace aggression is “any act against an employee that create a hostile work environment and adversely affects the employee, either physically or psychologically. These acts include all types of physical, verbal assault, threats, intimidation, coercion, and all forms of harassment” (Richard, 2009). “Aggression is considered a basic and important aspect of the human condition” (Mitchell, 2006). Workplace aggression can also be stated as “any form of behavior directed by one or more persons in a workplace toward the goal of harming one or more others in that workplace (or the entire organization) in ways the intended targets are motivated to avoid” (Ford, Kelloway, & Myrden, 2016).

“Workplace aggression can be verbally like abusing, rough or chanting language against any other employee which effects the mental health of victim and may lead to some serious actions, it can be physically like kicking someone, it can be damaging someone's property like breaking the car etc.” (Teo, Tummings, & Brunetto, 2015). It creates hostile in work place and can lead to serious disadvantages for the organization or company. It is not favoring the organization clearly.

It can create environment of hostile where employees' focus diverts from the work, which result in less outcome and performance from each individual. Such office environment create stress at work place. Leaders of offices often involve in politics of gaining more power over the other leader. Therefore, they don't want to be a part of any conflict or victim of any aggression. Leadership role is sometimes based on favoritism which cause injustice and unfair/biased decision lead to aggression in organization. "It would thus be a valuable contribution to organizational development if leaders and managers were able to manage anger in an appropriate way; good supervisors know how to diffuse employee anger, placate angry customers and control their own angry impulses" (Booth & Mann, 2005).

Leaders' interference in resolving the aggression is very low. They don't have any interest towards the aggression taking place in the workplace rather they only have interest towards their own career and power. One of the real-life story I came to know from my friend who was eye witness of the situation arose in a call center and the role of leadership there, explained here. One of the employee of J telemarketing faced incident, who later left because of the same workplace aggression reasons. He told that it was his and his friend's first day at office and both of them were little hesitated at the first day, his friend was wearing pink jeans and white t-shirt at that day. So, other employees starting laughing at him and started whispering about him and suddenly one chanted him "Pindi Girl". He was very depressed that day and said that he would leave the organization, but his friend insisted to stay and promised to talk to the manager. Next day that same thing happened again employees were chanting "Pindi Girl" again and again. This makes him feel very unpleased and he went to the manager and told the scenario, thought, he should resolve it but instead of resolving the issue and asking other employees not to chant again the manager told his friend that not to wear such shocking color dresses in call centers and ultimately his friend left the organization (J telemarketing).

Causes of Workplace Aggression

As we know that workplace aggression makes the organization suffer a lot so we should have to know what the reasons of Workplace Aggression are.

Some of the causes of workplace aggression are as under: -

i. Injustice

Injustice is the main reason of Workplace aggression. When the reward system in organization is biased or unfair, then employees feel physiologically ill or aggressive because when, an employee who is working hard with his full passion gets nothing and that one person, who is doing nothing much but he gets reward, because he has linkages to the mangers or any other illegal means. So this will cause deserved employees get frustrated and there will be injustice in the organization. This reward injustice may lead to the aggression of the employees. The division of duties and work burden can also be a part of injustice to the one who is not close to the top level management officers.

ii. Room Temperature (Heat)

Room temperature plays a vital role in Workplace aggression. My questionnaire shows the results that most of the employees are having aggression in organization due to the Room temperature. If your room temperature is not normal then the employees will be uncomfortable to do work effectively, efficiently and eventually Organization will suffer loss. So, it is Leader's responsibility to provide everything which is necessary to maintain the room temperature like having proper ventilation system, provide Air conditions, Fans, Heaters etc. whatever is needed to make Room Temperature normal so that employees work easily and comfortably.

iii. Clashes between employees

Workplace aggression spreads like fire when there is any clash going around in the organization because when two persons are fighting with each other, then other employees will definitely involve in that fight because some employees are their friends and they come for their help and in the end whole workplace suffer.

iv. Been the target of Rumors or Gossip

When an employee is being focused or targeted of rumors or gossips then he/she feels uncomfortable and nervous and, in the end, he/she feels aggressive to the coworkers and he/she will retaliate. This retaliation will be very dangerous for the employee as well as for the organization. He/she can/will leave the organization which will increase the turnover rate, absenteeism decreases in productivity etc.

In the end those employees who face workplace aggression could go anywhere else like in other organizations and they will tell others that this specific organization is bad for work, there are a lot of aggression in the organization and eventually it will defame the organization name.

Literature Review

This paper has gone through the previous Literature reviews while conducting this research. While going through different Literature, it is founded that most of the literature review which focuses more on Employees "workplace aggression" and very few wrote about leaders' or Managers role in Aggression.

I read that aggression towards co-workers presented by supervisors, affect their health and functioning of their work. Employees who faced work place aggression are less satisfied and feel burnout and general health issues (Merecz, Drabek, & Mościcka, 2009).

Prior research shows that workplace aggression is dangerous for both employees and company. In companies we see that individuals are quick for blaming others. A little problem can cause one individual start putting blame on other individuals. Due to this aggression originates in organization.

Aggression is very dangerous for any organization and individual himself/herself. Aggression in work place shows that employees are not much satisfied from their job due to this, absenteeism, turnover etc. increase in organization and productivity decreases. Whenever aggressive behavior comes into the work place then the role of leader comes there. As leader we can also assume manager, supervisor, CEO which set direction for employees. Leader can play a vital role to overcome the workplace aggression. Leader can motivate employees and provide flexible work environment to their employees. In past researches basically role of leader is limited in workplace aggression but it focuses on the behavior of the coworkers.

Coworker behavior has a very real effect on behavior of employees. When there is aggressive situation in workplace then employees likely to follow these situations and become aggressive. So, manager as a leader for their team faced with problems of aggressive behavior must consider both the individual employees and factor in the work environment when searching for the cause of aggressive behavior in the workplace.

Aggressive behavior should be stopped early before it spread to the other employees/coworkers and start an unfortunate epidemic. Manager should need to appreciate the worker and motivate them to create the flexible work environment when aggression comes in the way then performance of team would feel down and productivity decreases due to this company might be in loss. So, it is necessary to avoid workplace aggression.

Some of the finding indicates that aggressive trigger with coworker may be more abusive due to common and long-term term period touch with perpetrator and may spoil sense of personnel safety at work place to the level that drastically affects employees work satisfaction.

Weather and temperature have a power to change the mood of the employees. People who lives in high temperature countries have high rate of aggression. It is experimented that a person living in low temperature country have low rate of aggression. When we move that person from low temperature to high temperature his/her behavior will be more aggressive.

Crime rate of high temperature countries are higher than the low temperature countries. In the same way if the environment of the workplace is not suitable for the employees, temperature is not comfortable then the employees will react more aggressively than the normal routine. We normally judge that in summers traffic accidents are more than the winters. "Changes in routine activities may be able to explain summer increases in violent crime, but cannot account for the findings that baseball pitchers are more likely to hit batters with a pitched ball on hot days than on cool days" (Reifman, Larrick, & Fein, 1991).

"When a worker becomes frustrated, they may respond to that frustration by directing aggression towards the source of the frustration. However, in addition to their anger towards the source of their frustration, individuals are also likely to be more aggravated with the world in general" (Dollard, Miller, Doob, Mowrer, & Sears, 1939). This may include any person or object that the

aggrieved may encounter between the moment the frustration occurs, and the time in which the person has a chance to calm down.

Leadership should understand all types of aggressive behavior which can affect the organizational environment and its image and eventually cause workplace aggression. Rudeness, discontinuous behavior and verbal abuse harm the organization more sharply. Aggression between managers and workers & subordinates can cause employee's commitment in aggression in several ways.

First, employees use information about values, norms, expectations, and outcomes of behaviors (punishment or reward) gathered from others at work to guide their own behavior. For instance, if employees witness harmful acts occurring without punishment, they are likely to view such behaviors as acceptable in their work, such as coworkers conducting a heated aggressive argument that is tolerated by their managers.

Research Question

What is the role of leadership in Workplace aggression?

The research question itself explains that what leaders play role when there arose a situation of aggression at the workplace either aggression between employee or from outside any public or customer. The leaders' role in such time is very important. How the leader tackle the incident and resolve the aggression which can cause for infamous the organization in the society.

Objectives of Research

Anything happens for a reason and to find out the reason, we need to go for research. Primary objective of this research is to find out the root causes of aggression in an organization. On what basis the employees face such unfavorable conditions. As we know aggression is not favorable for better results / output, therefore to find out the consequences of aggression is the second objective. Third objective of this research is to take necessary possible steps and actions to gradually down the aggression in an organization.

Significance of Research

As an employee in service industry, I have experienced a lot of aggression from the public in government and private organization as well. As I have experienced the workplace aggression, the most significance of this exercise made me understand the reasons, causes and issues behind the aggression. Further it helped me in my profession to handle aggression and avoid unnecessary aggression. In professional life I can deliver the reasons, causes and issues to the higher management. Through this information bringing in the knowledge of the higher management could be helpful to resolves these issues at earliest to avoid any kind of aggression at the workplace. The higher management can make better decisions for the benefit of the organization. After the successful finishing of this paper I am able to analyze the workplace aggression causes and consequences of any company / organization independently without any

hesitation and can take decisions independently. At the conclusion stage I have rectified my mistake with the help of my course instructor and modified things where required for a better paper.

This project has surely made me professionally groomed and enhanced my skills and my grip on the workplace aggression of the companies.

My Project is also being very helpful for the Leaders and Managers to develop better understanding of the workplace aggression. The Leaders and Managers can get helpful information from this paper to overcome the issues and increase in the outputs of the organization by removing aggression among employees. The goodwill of the company will let the professionals and coworkers to join the organization without any hesitate. The Higher level management would introduced better packages for attracting the professionals to work for their organization.

Limitations

There were some limitations faced in research; Cultural and organization diversity is the first issue for collecting the data from different organizations. Some of employees were work overburden, and could not participated. Employees were not interested in filling our questionnaire as they had not time due to work burden. Some of employees filled the questionnaire in hurry as their bosses were there.

Methodology

Methodology is the tool used for findings and results. The best and easiest methodology would help the best outcomes / results about the research. It is the key factor of any research. Before going for research, we design our methodology for collection of data and analyzing of data there on. Convenient sampling method and cross sectional method are more suitable for this research. Both research methods are inexpensive and fast. Cross-sectional research design studies at a single point in a time. It does not allow manipulating variables. It allows researcher to look at numerous characteristics at once. It provides and shows information about what is the current situation in population. The questionnaire then analyzed through computer program software SPSS. Through this software we find out the results of keeping different variables. Frequency shows the relation between 2 or more different variables. The SPSS showed and provided information about the data collected that how the data is effecting the work place aggression.

This paper can also use longitudinal method for this paper. Longitudinal survey is taken from same group / sample of population at different times. The gap of time depending upon the requirement, the gap can more or less according to the nature of the research.

Date Collection

Data collection is a process in which data is collected for analyzing and results of the research. A fair and easy process of data collection provide better understanding and good results related to

the research, regardless of errors and omissions. The process of Data Collection should be organized and interested, so that maximum data would be collected. An ill-mannered process of data collection can effect on the results which can lead to discrepancies and the actual results will suffer. Some of the people often ignores the effective process of data collection which causes inconvenient outputs.

In this paper the primary data is collected based on questionnaire. The sampling technique was the best, fastest and easiest way to collect the data. The questionnaires were distributed among the sample of population. The questionnaire is directly fill out by the employees related to the research in a comfort place where they focused on the questionnaire and imagined the real situation as well.

• **Population**

The population of the study comprised on the Workforce i.e. workers especially working in service sector organizations. Population plays a vital role in the study to get the answers from different mentality of people thereon. Population is the total number of employees working at front desk in services industry. Here we consider the population as the experienced workers face number of public dealing in a day. Total 20 questionnaires were distributed to CSRs in Service sector area. We received 20 questionnaires which were properly filled which were considered and analyzed in the study. So, Response was 100%.

• **Sample of the Study**

I have selected 20 respondents voluntarily from the different organizations. These respondents were the front desk officers or representatives working in Islamabad and Rawalpindi Area. The selection of these respondents is based on their experience working as front face of the organization to the public. These respondents have much experience about the problems from the public since they are the representative of the companies.

• **Sampling Technique**

This study employed convenience sampling technique for primary data gathering. This technique is very helpful and ease for the study. The technique let us know the real picture of each individual based on questionnaire. In this technique the written questionnaire distribute among the respondents in the comfort area where they can focus on the questionnaire and can answer relatively according to the questions.

• **Instrument of the study**

As we want to know the response of CSR in Islamabad and Rawalpindi so we have to Survey that's why survey-based questionnaire was used for primary data gathering.

• **Procedure of the study**

In this study a survey-based questionnaire was used for primary data gathering. So that's why I went for collecting data and for survey. I asked from employees working in Service organizations as well as one of the Management people so that there will be no biasness left.

I first briefed them about my research and then took permission from the management to ask questions about my study. All the questionnaire was given to the 20 CSRs and I gave them all explanations which were required.

Data Analysis

Data analysis is the core part of any research. The results of the questionnaire were to be analyzed using a data analysis computer program (SPSS). It shows us the results of the data we have collected through sampling. The data is quantitative and can be analyzed through any research software like SPSS. It shows the correlation between the different variables and let us know about the results of the data we have collected. We analysis the data and get results of aggression through their age, gender, working hours, office environment, behavior of the managers and bosses. Through data analysis, we know that how the aggression takes place and what are the consequences. We able to learn how the aggression can be diminishing and how the environment of the organization can be reliable for employee as well as for visiting customers / clients.

Discussion and Conclusion

At the conclusion, this paper tells us about the consequences of workplace aggression and how the aggression effects on employees which ultimately lead effect on the output of the organization. Aggression is much neglected area in offices of Islamabad. This paper will help the higher management to take steps for the better output for the organization as well as reputation.

In this part the paper discussed the findings and gave the points on, "what leaders should do to reduce or eliminate workplace aggression".

Cost of Workplace Aggression

Its cost is bear simultaneously by Management and Employees as well for example if the Aggression in the workplace is happening then it will cause damage for organization in a sense that during quarrel the property of the organization will suffer and for employee in a sense that his/her health or reputation will suffer. Some of the major cost which is beard is followings.

- **Motivation down**

When there is an aggression in the workplace then the motivation level of the specific employee (which is being aggrieved) as well as other company employees will suffer because their attention will be diverted from the main work and when attention is being diverted the motivation level is disturbed and you have to build that level again.

- **Stress**

When there is an aggression going on in workplace than that employee will be in deep stress because of having that issue and that stress will low his work power, de-motivate him, and when he is in stress his colleagues will ask him/her about issue and when he/she will tell them about then whole employees work can be suffer and this will cause organization a great amount of loss.

- **Productivity low**

Having aggression in the workplace will affect the productivity the most. When employee is in stress physically or psychologically then he is not in a position to work well, he will work but not in a way which is productive for the organization. So, it will be bad for organization and leader should do something to tackle this situation.

- **Absenteeism**

Absenteeism rate will be rouse up while having physical or verbal assault, threats, coercion, intimidation, and all forms of harassment in the organization, maybe employee will not come because of having bad joke on him/her, or having bullied or any other reasons. Absenteeism will suffer organization in a way that it will lower its productivity level.

- **Turnover**

Turnover rate will be rouse up due to the behavior by which individuals attempt to harm others at work or in workplace. When employees will feel not safe in an organization where there is a lot of back biting or bullying etc. then he will leave the organization quickly and that quit from work will cost the organization a lot of amount i.e. Hiring, Recruiting, Selecting, training, developing etc.

What leaders can do to eliminate Work Place Aggression?

Leaders must know that aggressive behavior against the employees will have a negative impact to overall performance of organizations.

“Even slight aggressive acts are unhealthy for an organization. In a recent study from the University of North Carolina, 53% of workers that were targets of minor aggression stated that they were less productive, 37 % stated their commitment decreased, and 22 % of the targeted workers declined their work effort”. (www.envisionworks.net/media/bully.htm)(Olson, Nelson, & Parayitam, 2006).

Therefore, it is important that leaders understand that aggression – in any form – can create significant costs for their employees and ultimately affect the bottom line.

Workers look to their managers as a role models for them. i.e. whatever behaviors they do they take it as a suitable behavior so, Managers who engage in harmful behaviors without punishment, communicate indirectly to employees that such behaviors are acceptable in the work environment. I also asked the employees about which type of leadership style they want and what improvements could reduce the workplace aggression.

After the research I made some recommendations which leaders should adopt to overcome workplace aggression.

Good Behavior with Employees

Workplace aggression due to the bad behavior of the leadership. Good behavior is one of the most important factor to control the aggressive behavior of the employees. If the leader behave with employees like they are their servants then employees get de-motivated, they'll not perform well and also aggressive behavior all the time. So leader must have to give value to their employees.

Orientation session

From the very start of the day when the employee joins the organization then he/she will be given proper orientation about the workplace and their responsibilities by the Leader that what they should do and what they shouldn't do. They should be told that if they do anything which will harm other employees then strict action should be made against him and Leader should deliver these words.

Proper Room Temperature

Room temperature plays a vital role in Workplace aggression. If your room temperature is not normal, then the employees will be uncomfortable to do work effectively and efficiency and eventually Organization will suffer loss. So it is Leader's responsibility to provide proper ventilation system, provide Air conditions, Fans, Heaters etc. whatever it is needed to make Room Temperature normal so that employees work easily.

Effective Performance Appraisal system (270-degree appraisal system)

Leaders should build an effective performance appraisal system to check and balance that no one will feel that they are being treated badly at work because their performance is being checked. The leadership should adopt any of the Performance appraisal systems to appraise the employees. Leader should adopt 270-degree appraisal system to check so that there will be no biasness. When leader appraise their employees according to their performances then employees who work hard get motivated and do their best. In 270-degree appraisal system 3 of the members can evaluate the performance of the employees. These members may be their subordinate, peers, self.

Provide Essentials tools and equipment for work

Leader should provide the tools to the employee so they will work properly. If the tools are not appropriate and according to the work of employees, then employees will irritate to their work. They may leave the organization or may be their performance will decrease day by day and it may cause to the aggressive behavior.

Training for employees

The managers / team leaders and top level management should organize training sessions for employees to raise awareness of interpersonal impact in the workplace. It may help to promote a good work environment.

Future Research

As I have done research on “Role of leadership in Workplace Aggression” in Service oriented organizations. So, I will leave further research on “Role of leadership during workplace aggression in Manufacturing Industry”. So that this Work place aggression study further expands.

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