

A study on the importance of effective grievance redressal mechanisms with a special reference to females in the private sector.

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Abstract - Purpose – To study the importance of effective grievance redressal mechanisms with a special reference to females in the private sector.

Research Implications – This paper highlights the importance of an effective grievance redressal mechanism in organizations, with a special reference to females, the impact it has on employee performance and the role it has in building an organization's brand image.

Findings – This paper studied that an effective grievance redressal is of extreme importance in an organization. It promotes organizational success and smooth running. One of the primary requirements for employee satisfaction is having an effective grievance redressal mechanism. Further, since employees act as the link between the organization and the outside world, satisfied employees provide a positive image for the organization leading to a better reputation.

Keywords – Effectiveness, employee grievance redressal mechanism, gender discrimination, females, redressals, employees.

I. INTRODUCTION

One of the most prized assets of an organization is their human resources i.e., the employees of the organization, and keeping them satisfied and happy in their position ensures organizational success. Every employee joins an organization with the intention to grow, both career wise and personally. When an employee is dissatisfied with the working of the organization or believe that the organization is not working in their best interests, it is called a grievance. One of the basic and most crucial element of effective human resource management is the grievance redressal mechanism an organization has in place.

While all genders face grievances while working in an organization, the system is generally tougher on females, with females having to face gender discrimination on a daily basis, improper working conditions, cases of harassment, sexism etc. Apart from being morally and socially wrong, it is also a crime. Workplace harassment faced by females is no different from the harassment faced by them on a regular basis and is exploitative. Further, females play a significant role in the successful running of any organization. Hence, it is imperative that there exists an appropriate and useful grievance redressal mechanism in a workplace. This paper aims to analyze the importance of an effective grievance redressal mechanism with a special reference to females in the private sector.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE.

(Obiekwe & Uchechi, 2019) Highlights the impact of effective grievance redressals on organizational performance. Whilst it is impossible to stop employee grievances in an organization entirely, handling the matter swiftly and justly ensures that an organization doesn't get overwhelmed by it and employee morale remains high. Employee redressal mechanism is also a crucial part of personnel management. Effective management of employee grievance helps create a harmonious relationship between the employee and the employer. It also serves as a means for the organization to identify problematic practices and evaluate areas of constant discontent. Since a large number of grievances are usually related to working conditions, incentives etc., organizations should strive to reduce the chances of these grievances by making the necessary changes. Another dimension of grievance management is "collective bargaining". This occurs in cases of unsatisfactory working conditions, work timings etc. where the interests of the employees are collectively represented by a trade union who acts as a negotiator for the employees in an organization. Lastly, ineffective grievance management leads to employee absenteeism, increased attrition rates, possible strikes and a decline in the employee's commitment to work which will hamper the organization's smooth functioning and its chances of being successful.

(Duad et al., 2013) - Argues on whether managers need to be trained on how to handle grievances and how it helps in choosing a style of leadership. The first and basic form of redressal available to employees is approaching their supervisor. There has been drastic decrease in communication between an employer- employee and is now reduced to a strictly work based relationship. Some of the styles usually used by managers are – integrating, obliging, comprising, dominating and avoiding. This paper further highlighted why it's crucial to train managers in handling grievances. grievance redressal training will provide managers with the right experience to choose the appropriate style to be used to resolve grievances successfully. Further, grievance redressal training also gives the managers a view into the nature of employee grievances and help resonate with employees better. For e.g. – the most welcoming style will be integrating. In this the manager listened to both sides, tries to think of alternatives and conduct appropriate grievance discussions. However, this style also takes up a lot of work time. The dominating style is preferred in cases where the organization's rules and regulations came into consideration and in following the terms and conditions of the employee's contract.

III. MPORTANCE OF EFFECTIVE GRIEVANCE REDRESSAL MECHANISMS.

Employee satisfaction is of outmost importance in an organization. Having an effective grievance redressal mechanism not only works in favor of the employees but also the organization. It allows an organization to be updated with an employee's opinion of the company policies which will have a direct impact on the work culture in the organization. It also keeps a hold of a manager's attitude, teaches them to be team players, empathetic and problem solvers since they must listen to their subordinates and come up with solutions that do not negatively impact the organization or the employee. Further, since employees represent the organization to the outside world, satisfied employees create a good image for the organization.

Further, an effective grievance redressal mechanism will motivate the employees, make them feel valued, ensuring employees give their best to the organization leading to a cordial work atmosphere which paves way for a harmonious relationship between the employer and employee. Often employees change jobs in search for better opportunities, an effective employee grievance redressal mechanism may motivate an employee to remain in the organization, leading to better talent retention and lower attrition rates. It also empowers employees and allows for small issues to resolve without much of a hassle.

In today's day and age, with employees being empowered to speak out against any grievance or unfair practice followed

by an organization on social media or various other platforms an effective grievance redressal mechanism becomes a critical element to protect an organization from a bad image.

With respect to grievances faced by females, a significant number of female employees continue to be subjected to gender based harassment and sexism. Due to this, the workplace productivity contributed by females is significantly lower. An effective grievance redressal mechanism can help rectify this and provide a safe and respectful workplace for females.

IV. MEANS TO REDUCE GRIEVANCES.

Grievances are inevitable in every organization; However, it is possible to reduce its occurrence by using certain methods in addition to ensuring proper working conditions and incentives –

- Open Door Policy – This method is effective in a small-scale organization. According to this method, any employee can approach the senior most level of management with a grievance. However, this is not possible in a large-scale organization and in a large-scale organization, the chain of command must be followed.
- Exit Interviews – A lot of employees leave organizations for multiple reasons, conducting exit interviews can help find out possible grievances they had and can be used by the organization to make the necessary changes.
- Surveys – Surveys, anonymous forms etc., can be circulated in order to find out possible grievances' employees may have. Keeping the forms anonymous may allow employees to feel more comfortable with talking about their grievances.
- Workshops – Organizations can conduct workshops on a regular basis with the aim of interacting with the employees, to inform employees of any changes in the grievance redressal mechanisms. Further, these workshops can use activities which can help assure employees to come forward with any grievance they face.
- Quick and effective Action – Lastly, upon receiving a grievance, it is imperative for the organization to act on it in a timely manner and in the case of a recurring grievance, find the root cause of it and rectify it at the earliest.

V. LEGAL REDRESSALS AVAILABLE TO FEMALES AND ITS CONSTRAINTS.

- POSH Act, 2013. Some of the crucial elements are –

- As per this Act, any woman in relation to a workplace, whether employed or not comes under the ambit of this Act.
- It covers all form of gender based sexual harassment including implied sexual harassment like gestures etc. provided it was non-consensual.
- It applies to all sectors and organizations having more than 10 employees. A crucial point to note that the harassment must occur in the workplace and not outside of it.
- Every office must constitute an ICC (Internal Complaints Committee) to handle grievances.
- The ICC must consist of a presiding officer who will be a female of senior position, two or more committee members of the same organization and a representative of an NGO or organization working against sexual harassment or for human rights.
- Every organization must formulate a “no harassment policy”, keep the grievances confidential, take preventive measures, hold awareness programmes for all the employees, ensure the complaints are resolved on a timely basis etc.

Despite the existence of this Act to protect females and other options to raise grievances, employees are generally still hesitant to come forward with their grievances because of its inefficient implementation. Some organizations do not have an Internal Complaints Committee (ICC), others let the identity of the complainant slip which could lead to the employee facing certain amount of backlash, retaliation and victim blaming. Further, female employees are viewed as “weak” or “fragile” which may impact their career opportunities. The most burdensome fact is that; female employees often blame themselves. To add to their woes, private sector organizations are generally not held accountable or made answerable to anybody and prefer sweeping grievances under the rug to maintain a good image. With respect to the Act, it also places a time limit of 6 months to lodge a complaint which is not sufficient since sexual harassment is a highly traumatic event and requires time to process.

VI. SIGNIFICANCE.

In the modern era, not only have employees begun to be vocal about what they want and what interests them, but are also willing to voice out their grievances and their opinions and stand up for things they believe is wrong and expect it to be addressed. They also function as a critical asset needed in an organization for it to succeed and have an edge over its competitors. Employees no longer just look at the package they will be receiving or the career opportunities but prefer a place where they know their interests are

protected and know that the issues or problems, they face in the organization will be well addressed. Further, employees also prefer a knowledge-based environment that constantly challenge them and provides for stimulation and a certain level of competition.

It cannot be denied that females face a significantly higher number of grievances as compared to males. They are subject to systematic gender-based harassment, sexism and misogynist behavior despite constituting a significant part of the employee pool. While there are government legislations and Acts in order to protect them, its lack of proper implementation acts as a hindrance, especially in the private sector. A survey conducted showed that approx. 70% of females even refuse to lodge a grievance out of fear of repercussions and the stigma associated with it.

To add on, a proper grievance redressal mechanism also helps increase brand image of the organization. Employees are the brand ambassadors of an organization. When they feel valued and heard, it is visible to the outside world as well. Further, in the digital age, having a proper redressal mechanism is necessary to avoid the “bad press” that comes with a mishandled grievance which can lead to a diminished brand image.

VII. SUGGESTIONS

The Human Resource Department of any organization plays a key role in solving grievances. It is impossible for a straight-jacket formula to be available for grievance redressal. Hence, it is crucial that the HR department of every organization is made strong and diverse. Further, despite organizations having grievance redressal mechanisms, few employees may still be unaware or may be aware but still choose not to make use of it due to various reasons. To prevent this happening, organizations must conduct regular grievance redressal awareness programs or workshops to strive to create an environment where an employee feels comfortable enough to raise a grievance.

The various legislation enacted also need to be properly implemented to eradicate gender-based harassment. The HR department can work in tandem with the legal department to create zero tolerance policy for harassment and every employee in the organization has to be made aware of this. The policy implementation can be monitored by a senior employee or an outside person in order to prevent bias and ensure effective policy implementation. The employees of the organization, especially females need to be empowered enough to stand up for themselves and come forward with grievances, for which it is crucial to ensure that the organization is a safe space for females.

To add on, it is possible to reduce the number of grievances by ensuring proper working conditions, leaves, pay and incentives etc. Lastly, the managers act as a primary contact

for every employee with a grievance to address. Hence, it is imperative that managers are trained to handle employees with care, learn to be empathetic and are well acquainted with the grievance redressal mechanism their organization follows.

VIII. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, to ensure maximum workplace productivity and successful running of an organization, it is imperative for the organization to have an effective grievance redressal mechanism for employees that not only provide solutions to general work environment, pay and incentives issues etc., but also ensures that gender-based harassment and discrimination is entirely eradicated from the organization.

Every employee has to be given an equal chance to be heard and their grievance tended to. Further, having a strong redressal mechanism will significantly improve improve organizational environment and the employee's attitude towards the organization. Ultimately, it is stating the obvious that employees are the backbone of any organization and it is their right to have a safe and healthy work environment. For any organization to truly succeed, keeping the employees satisfied is their best solution.

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