

CHAPTER - II.

CONCEPTUAL INPUTS - A FRAME-WORK OF

THE STUDY.

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The Dictionary meaning of the word 'Grievance' states as - a wrong considered as grounds for complaint; resentment or complaint, or the ground for complaint against an unjust act. It is rather a difficult task to define a grievance. Personnel experts however, have attempted to distinguish between dissatisfaction, complaint and grievance. Generally speaking, dissatisfaction is any state or feeling of discontent, whether it is innate and unexpressed or explicitly expressed. A dissatisfaction which is orally made known by one employee to another is known as a complaint. A complaint becomes a grievance, when this dissatisfaction, which is mostly related to work, is brought to the notice of the management.

Sometimes this definition is modified to include the fact that a complaint should be in writing and not expressed verbally. Some organisations understand the word grievance in a broader sense; they insist that a complaint should be processed through normal grievance procedure channels. The word grievance has, therefore, been variously defined by different authorities.

For example, Dale Yoder, defines a Grievance as 'a written complaint filed by an employee and claiming unfair treatment'. Secondly Keith Davis, defines it as "any real or imagined feeling of personal injustice which an employee has, concerning his employment relationship". Thirdly, according to Jucius, "a grievance is any discontent or dissatisfaction, whether expressed or not, whether valid or not, arising out of anything connected with the company which an employee thinks, believes or even feels to be unfair or unjust."

According to this definition, a discontent can be termed as a grievance only if it is concerned with the company policies or actions. Its form of expression or its validity is unimportant. Whether or not a particular employee has a grievance is upto him or her, and not to the Supervisor or any other member of management.

The manager, however, has to be concerned with all discontents and has to watch for unexpressed dissatisfaction as an effective approach to the development of good morale. This definition is very broad, and covers the dissatisfactions which have the following characteristics -

- 1) The discontent must arise out of something related with the company. Workers may be dissatisfied because of several reasons such as illness in the family, quarrel with a neighbour, and so on. Such outside sources are beyond the control of the company and, therefore, do not constitute a grievance.

2) The discontent may be expressed or implied.

Expressed grievances are comparatively easy to recognise and are expressed in several ways e.g., gossiping, jealousy, active criticism, argumentation, increased labour turnover, carelessness in the use of tools and materials, untidy house-keeping, poor workmanship and so on. Unexpressed grievances are indicated by indifference to work, day dreaming, absenteeism, tardiness and so on. It is not wise to recognise only the expressed grievance and overlook the unexpressed ones. In fact, unexpressed or implied grievances are more dangerous than the expressed ones because it is not known when they may explode. Hence, the executive should develop a seventh sense for anticipating such grievances. He should be sensitive to even the weak and 'implied' signals from the employee. An employee may casually remark that it is too hot in the room or that he has been assigned a job that he does not like. All such casual remarks and grumblings are implied grievances. Only for an alert and observant Supervisor it is possible to discover what is bothering the employees before they themselves are aware of grievances.

3) The discontent may be valid, legitimate and rational or untrue and irrational. The point is that, when a grievance held by one employee comes to the notice of the management, it cannot usually dismiss it, as untrue. Such grievances also have to be attended by the management in the same way as the rational grievances. We should know that the

large part of our behaviour is irrational. Emotional grievances are based upon the sentiments viz. Love, hatred, anger, fear and so on. and lack of thinking and misconception are the examples of our irrational behaviour. These grievances are the most difficult to handle.

One advantage of giving a widest possible meaning to the term 'grievance' is that the possibility of the manager overlooking any complaints is very much reduced. Even those discontents which have not yet assumed great importance for the complaint and have therefore not moved into formal procedural channels, such as casual remarks technically called complaints, comes within the scope of the grievance handling machinery of the organisation.

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) defines a grievance as " a complaint of one or more workers in respect of wages, allowances and conditions of work, interpretation of service, stipulations covering such areas as overtime, leave, transfer, promotion, seniority , job assignment and termination of service."

In the opinion of the National Commission on Labour, " complaints affecting one or more individual workers in respect of wage payments, overtime, leave, transfer, promotion, seniority, work assignment and discharges constitute grievances."

On an analysis of these various definitions, it may be noted that -

i) Grievance is a word which covers dissatisfaction and which has one or more of the following characteristics :

- (a) It may be unvoiced or expressly stated by an employee.
- (b) It may be written or verbal.
- (c) It may be valid and legitimate, untrue or completely false, or ridiculous, and
- (d) It may arise out of something connected with the organisation or work.

ii) An employee feels that an injustice has been done to him.

In other words, grievances are feelings, sometimes real sometimes imagined, which an employee may have in regard to his employment situation.

Why should employees Grievances be heard & removed ?

Whenever there is any discontent among employees, it is bound to result in a disorder which may affect the interests of the management very adversely. Grievances generally give rise to unhappiness, frustration, discontent, indifference to work, poor morale, and they ultimately lead to the inefficiency of workers and low productivity. A personnel administrator

should, therefore, see that the grievances are redressed at the earliest possible moment, failing which the whole set-up of the organisation may tumble down. He must know and understand the causes which lie behind the grievances, and how these may be set right.

In industrial relations, prompt settlement of grievances is of much more importance than the settlement of disputes in as much as the former is preventive action whereas the latter is only a curative action in the ordering of good industrial relations and the successing of industrial peace. Unless promptly settled, grievance can result into industrial disputes.

In every organisation, where people work together, there will inevitably be grievances. There is nothing reprehensible about people feeling aggrieved and expressing their grievances. Grievances served as a useful safety wall in industrial relations in any organisation. Most situations of industrial conflict have their root in the accumulation of unmanaged grievance situations which were originally individual.

If the grievance level in an organisation is too low this could mean either the level of frustration has created a relationship of apathy among the employees and Supervisors or the head of employees towards search for satisfaction has gone too low. Both these circumstances are harmful to an organisation.

The importance of grievance management arises from the necessity of handling the problems in a fair manner and avoiding the potentially high costs associated with the unresolved conflicts for example the unresolved grievances are closely related with the employee turnover and absenteeism. Sometimes purely managed conflicts adversely affected the commitment and the productivity of the employee, and increases the intensity of grievances.

Causes and Sources of Grievances

From practical point of view, it is probably easier to list those items that do not participate grievances than to list the ones that do. Just any factor involving wages, hours or conditions of employment has and can be used as a basis of grievance.

An employee is dissatisfied and expresses his grievance when he feels that there has been an infringement of his rights, that his interests have been jeopardised. This sense of grievance generally arises out of misinterpretation, misapplication of the company policies and practices.

Some of the examples of workers' grievances are :

i) Concerning to wages :

- a) Demand for individual adjustment; the worker feels that he is underpaid.
- b) Complaints about incentives; like piece rates are too low or too complicated.
- c) Mistakes in calculating the wages of workers.

ii) Concerning to Supervision :

- a) Complaints against discipline, inadequate instructions given for job performance.
- b) Objection to having a particular foreman; the foreman is playing favouritism; the foreman ignores complaints.
- c) Objections to the manner in which the general methods of supervision are used; there are too many rules; regulations are not clearly posted; indulging in spoiling activities by the supervisors.

iii) Concerning Individual Advancement :

- a) Complaint against the unfair break given in the service record of the employee.
- b) Complaint that the seniority of older and more experienced employees have been ignored .

iv) General Working Conditions :

- a) Complaints against toilet facilities being inadequate about inadequate and dirty lunch rooms.
- b) Complaints about working conditions, dampness, noise, fumes and other unpleasant or unsafe conditions, which can be easily corrected. The employee loses too much of time in case the material supplied to him is delayed.

v) Collective bargaining :

- a) A company is attempting to undermine the trade union and the workers belonging thereto; the contract between the labours has been violated. The company does not handle the union grievances effectively.
- b) The company does not allow the supervisors to deal with, and settle, the grievances of the employees;

- c) The company disregards the agreements already arrived at with the workers or their union.

The important causes of Grievances can be summed up as under :

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| i) Promotions | ix) Medical benefits |
| ii) Amenities | x) Nature of job |
| iii) Continuity of services | xi) Payment of wages |
| iv) Compensation | xii) Safety Appliances |
| v) Disciplinary action | xiii) Supression |
| vi) Fines | xiv) Transfers |
| vii) Increments | xv) Victimization |
| viii) Leave | xvi) Conditions of work etc. |

It should be noted that there is no single factor which causes a grievance; many factors combine to generate a grievance; and both employer and the employee have grievances against one another.

To sum up the employee grievances may be due to :

- a) Demand for individual wage adjustment;
- b) Complaints about the incentive system,
- c) Complaints about the job classifications,
- d) Complaints against a particular foreman,
- e) Complaints concerning disciplinary measures and procedures.

- f) Objections to the general method of supervision,
- g) Unsatisfactory interpretation of agreements,
- h) Promotions
- i) Disciplinary discharges of lay off,
- j) Transfer to another department or another shift,
- k) Inadequate safety and health facilities,
- l) Non-availability of material in time,
- m) Violation of contract relating to collective bargaining,
- n) Improper job assignment,
- o) Undesirable working conditions.

The management too have grievances against the employees. These concern :

- a) Indiscipline
- b) Go slow tactics
- c) Non fulfilment of the term of contract signed by the workers
- d) Failure of the trade union to keep up its promise to the management
- e) Doubtful methods adopted by Trade Union to enlist members
- f) Irresponsible charges made by the Union against the management, in the form of public speeches, press-interviews etc.

It should be noted that some grievances are more serious than others since they are more difficult to settle. Discipline cases and seniority problems such as promotions, transfer, lay offs etc. would top the list. A grievance is just a symptom of an underlying problem.

Individual and Policy Grievances

Employee issues are grouped into two categories. The first is individual grievance which aims at gaining a personal benefit and usually refers to the administration or conduct of a policy or a practice. The second policy grievance, refers to the questioning of the appropriateness of the existing organisational policies and system and guidelines.

Individual grievance include disagreement with a performance evaluation, disagreement with the Supervisor, and the like. These complaints are usually within the frame work of organisational appeal processes and tend to relate personally to the employee. Policy complaints include disagreement with organisational policies, procedures and practices. It is generally reported that about 80% of the grievances are individual complaints and the rest are policy grievances.

Some characteristics of the individual grievances and those of policy grievances are shown in the table given below. From the table it can be seen that the employees complaining individual complaints are more likely to report with their supervisors.

Employees with individual complaints	Employees with policy complaints
Greater dissatisfaction over relationship with their Supervisor.	Greater ideological differences with their organisational goals and practices.
Lower sense of participation.	Lesser intrinsic job satisfaction.
Lower sense of recognition.	Greater feeling that the people are penalised for personnel political views.
Average age higher.	Average age lower.
Average years of service higher.	Average years of service lower.

a) From the given table it can be seen that the experience of employees with policy grievances is quite different from the experience of employees with individual grievances.

b) Employees with specific policy complaints have greater ideological differences with the organisational goals and practices.

c) The employees of policy complaints are also found to be younger and with fewer years of service. It is possible that older employees and employees with more years of services show greater acceptance of the system.

d) The data suggests that interpersonal factors are most significant in the expression of individual complaints, while issue relating to organisational context and ideology are the most criticals in policy complaints.

How does an employee come to express his grievance ?

Expression of grievance is also a sort of behaviour. It gets initiated when the employee experiences lack of satisfaction of a strongly felt need; this creates a disequilibrium in his emotional make up and the human system proceeds to restore equilibrium. For this purpose, the employee scans his environment and tries to locate

alternatives for satisfaction of his needs. He selects one of the alternative, which he feels in achievable within the scope of his resources. This alternative has been named as 'Want'. Having selected a "want", the individual attempts more concrete action to achieve satisfaction of his need.

The manner in which an employee constructs the expression of his grievance will depend on what he sees as the rewarding behaviour in a given set of circumstances. Often people express their grievances in term of substitute needs, through expression that they are able to legitimate , more readily and with which they can easily associate the dissatisfaction they are experiencing for the time being.

The misplaced emphasis in expression of grievance is therefore, not a deliberate act in most cases. Where it is deliberate there is little that one can do. One must, therefore, make every effort to understand the true nature of the employee grievances; and what is more important, is to help him to do so. For this, it is necessary to develop a relationship of trust with the employee. They will help, to find the correct remedial step towards managing that grievance.

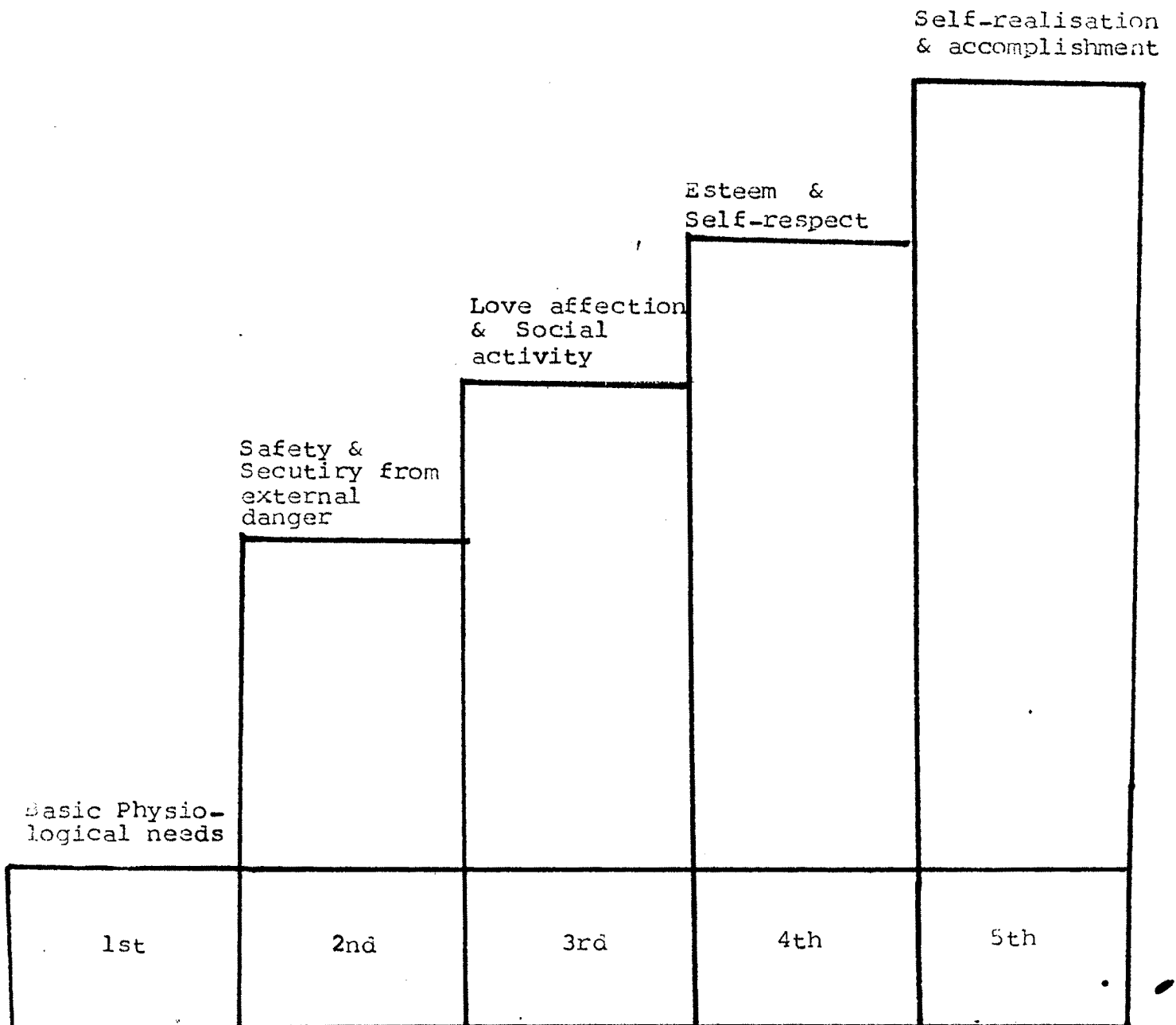
A grievance as expressed by an employee cannot be simply be quoted to indicate his frustration or dissatisfaction. For example, an employee may express a grievance regarding appraisal rating, but he may also be dissatisfied with the supervisor subordinate relationship. The specific issue of complaint can be understood only by apprehending the total picture of the employee. As such, individual grievances are accompanied by interpersonal difficulties. On the other hand policy issues are raised with a drive to modify the organisational frame work. The policy grievance is, therefore, driven by ideologies, attitudes towards the organisation and systematic function. For policy grievances the background factor includes dissatisfaction with organisational context and ideological factors.

The resolution of individual grievances has to be address the underlying interpersonal issues at same level. On the other hand resolutions of policy grievances would require that changes be initiated in the organisation system. This is important because, if the underlying issues for individual and policy grievances are different, channels and processes for effective resolution of issues cannot be the same.

The process of employee grievances is complex, just because the identification of human needs is difficult. A number of studies have been made in the are of the human

needs. One concept that illustrates the magnitude of this complexity is the one formulated by Abraham Maslow : which is known as " HIERARCHY OF HUMAN NEEDS ". He has grouped human needs into five levels as shown below.

MASLOW'S HIERARCHY OF HUMAN NEEDS



According to Maslow, when needs at the lower levels, get relatively, satisfied, man starts seeking satisfaction of those at the next higher level. Basic physiological needs such as sleep, hunger, functioning of human organs etc. are usually satisfied to a reasonable degree in the case of most industrial employees. Thus most of the needs that get reflected in the employee grievance are seen in the Maslow's model of hierarchy of human needs.