

The Role of Effective Communication in Resolving Conflict in Afar Regional State

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Abstract

Effective communication is a crucial element in our lives and it is the basis for the organizational objective achievement. Moreover, as it is known quality of communication has a direct impact on the quality of relationship. This is why effective communication is crucial. The general objective of this study is to assess the role of effective communication in conflict resolution process in Samara Loggia town municipality. Both primary and secondary data would be obtained and used from top manager and the non- managerial employees of municipality by interview and questionnaire methods of data collection. The secondary data would be collected by reviewing records, journals and brochures of the municipality. The study also census that questioner all employee distribution to the organizations. To analyze the findings of the study and the collected data qualitative analysis method would be used. Based on the findings of the study, work over load, communication gap to resolve conflict, less attention given by management for discussion, less response of management for employees' grievances, less contribution of communication on conflict resolution process, and difference in attitude towards communication are the major problems that affect communication not to achieve its goal (conflict resolution). Finally, the researcher recommended that management should understand the source of conflict, stimulate functional conflict, and prevent dysfunctional conflict, giving attention for discussion by management, sufficient response of management for employees' grievance, using effective communication to resolve conflict and encouraging employees' positive attitude of communication to resolve conflict can be solutions to resolve the above-mentioned problems.

key words: *Conflict resolution and Effective communication*

INTRODUCTION

Communication is the process of sharing ideas, information and messages with others. The most basic communication methods that are known to man are speech and non-verbal expressions such as facial expressions and body language. Apart from these basic methods of communication, there are other methods of communication. These methods began to involve and become complex (I.von Glion, mary Ann young and Steven L.Mc Shane; 1976:392). Effective/ Good communication usually requires a two-way flow of information rather than simply delivering messages work on creating a flow of message and feedback. A Sender conveys a message, and receiver responds with feedback and perhaps a new message (Cullinan; 1996:327)

Poor or inaccurate communication can lead to conflict and negativity in the work place. It could even lead to the cancellation of deal or the loss of good will. However, in this competitive environment business cannot afford such losses (Cullinan; 1996:329) Conflict is a process in which one party perceives that its interests are being opposed or negatively affected by another party. This may be a mild disagreement between two people regarding the Best choice in decision (Mary Ann and Steven L.MC Shane ; 1976:402).

On the other hand, conflict is a disagreement of ideas between and among peoples. Conflict has both destructive and constrictive sides. Destructive conflict could be solved as it occurs, others wise it is a challenge to the growth of any organization. Constrictive conflict could increase innovation and creativity. Communication in modern history has many important activities. Among these, it has a great role in resolving destructive conflict and increasing constructive conflict.

Conflict often occurs due to the lack of opportunity, ability, or motivation to communicate effectively. As communication is essential to the communities of a given organization, especially for managers to coordinate the human and other resources of an organization, they required ability to communicate effectively.

To coordinate these human resources they should avoid conflicts that occur between employees. To avoid these problems communication is vital (Mary Ann and Steven L. mc Shane; 1976: 408). Considering point about communication, effective communication, conflict and their relation, the researcher tried to see the role affect effective communication on conflict resolution process of Samara Logia Town municipality.

Managers of resources world over especially human resources are often faced with handling and managing conflict that exists within the workplace. They are often faced with the challenge of finding out whether communication is necessary in reducing conflict and whether effective communication can actually reduce conflict within an organization. A major challenge is the place of the skill possessed by the communicator (Robbins 2011, p.432). Many studies have existed on communication and conflict generally. Fewer of these studies, if any, locally, have really attempted to investigate the effect of effective communication in reducing conflict in an organization. This paper therefore intends to fill that missing intellectual gap.

Communication links individuals, groups, societies and nations but people do not always do well in communication and thus end up with misunderstandings or breakdown in relationships (Wanjama et al 2010). In a municipality situation, poor communication between employees and the administration can for example lead to conflict, in arbaminch town municipality initiatives by the administration or administrators taking unnecessary disciplinary measures or de-motivation among employees or the administrators

As long as people in organization work together, conflict is inevitable or unavoidable. This means as people work together the incompatibility of goals, attitudes, emotions or behaviors lead to disagreement or opposition between them. Conflicts occur because people do not agree on goals, issues; perceptions and people inevitably compete for the scare resources (Culminant, 1996).

Some authors say that any organization has no meaning without communication. To reduce or if possible to avoid the above inevitable conditions, communication have a vital role. Communication is not only used for conflict resolution but also it is the basis for the organizations objectives achievements, increasing productivity, job satisfaction , getting information about competitors dimension, to cope with modern information technology and any activates in any field of study . Thus, the fact is that communication is the crucial element in our lives.

The factors that motivated the student researcher to study the problem on communication of municipality were poor and not sufficient service that the employees of the municipality provide for their customers as the researcher is one who takes service from them. Moreover, from compliant of other customers, the researcher thinks that poor and not sufficient service may be from lack of communication on resolving conflict. Before this study, as the manager of municipality told to the student researcher, there is no study under taken on effective communication in resolving conflict, which is a burning issue to be discussed and solved by the management of the organization.

General Objective

The general objective of this study is to assess the role of effective communication on conflict resolution process in Samara Logia Town municipality.

Significance of The Study

In the current world, every organization faces different controllable and uncontrollable challenges, whether it is profit making or non-profit making. In order to adapt and cope up with uncontrollable situations, organizations, mangers, and

all employees of the organization together should set productive measures and at least attempt to minimize the effect of these situations on business activities.

According to Stephen P. Robbins (1996, p. 419) An organization is accounted for planning, coordinating, controlling and doing things in manageable course of actions to achieve its goal effectively and efficiently. Therefore any organization whether small or large, profit or non-profit organization, needs the assessment of its business feature, nature, role, strength and weakness and functions.

Considering the above importance of conducting studies, investigating the role of communication on resolving conflict is important as it is one of business element is believed to be the crucial issue for the municipality. The beneficial bodies used by this study are the organization:- After conducting this research the organization would be beneficiary in that the manager see the identified problems and recommended solutions of the study and take corrective action in the way and function of entire communication as to resolve conflict.

Scope of The Study

Even if communication has many roles in different situations, in different organizations, the researcher would be focus only on the role of communication in resolving conflict. Because as it is known distinctive conflict is challenge for the overall organization, the researcher would like to study how this distinctive conflict can get the solution. And the researcher selects effective communication from other extraneous variables such as reward, performance appraisal. Which are the ways of deducting if possible eliminating conflict within the organization?

The reason for communication is selected from other extraneous variables is that communication generalize them or those extraneous variables cannot come up without communication.

On the other hand the researcher would be conducted the research only on the employees of Samara Logia Town municipality from north eastern Afar region municipality is because the municipality is near to the student researcher study area and the researcher fears shortage of time on the time of collecting data from different municipality of Afar region.

Research Methodology

The study would be conducted in north eastern parts of Ethiopia the afar region Samara loggia town municipality which is found on 588km from the capital city of Addis Ababa. This study concocted on the role of effective communication in resolving conflict in case study of Samara loggia town municipality.

Both primary and secondary data would be used for this study. Hence, necessary data were gathered from the primary data (questioner or interview schudels) such as non-managerial workers and top manager of Samara loggia town municipality and secondary data (Broach er of the municipality and related journals and books).

In this study, both primary and secondary data collection methods would be used. Principally, self-administrated questionnaires are proposed tool for primary data collection method. Because the time given to conduct this study is short, the researcher would be used this technique to get more data within a short period. As an additional source of primary data unstructured interview was held with the top manager of Samara loggia Town municipality. And secondary data would be collected through review of the company documents.

After the data is being collecting, data are process on the activity, which involves editing, coding, and classifying data to make it suitable for further analysis. Descriptive analyses would be employed to examine the findings of the study. Since, it refers to procedures for organizing, summarizing, and describing quantitative data about the samples of the study. After the data are processed and analyzed well, it would be presented by using tables, charts, and graphs with their figures and interpreted in a convenient manner accordingly.

Discussions and Results

Conflict conditions and reasons for conflict

Conflict occurs because people do not always agree on goals, issues, perception and so on. And also, conflict is pervasive in organizations. To manage it effectively, managers should understand the many source of conflict (Debral; 1994:392).

The study reveals that (60%) of the respondents replied that they faced conflict with the employees of their or/and other department. In addition, the remaining (40%) of the respondents responded that they did not face any conflict. This shows that the largest part of employees face conflict. The above information indicates that there were conflicts within organization.

The study shows (83.33%) of the respondents responded the reasons why they were conflicting was due to work over load form their superiors, and, (16.66%) of the respondents replied that they faced conflict because of communication gap in resolving conflict. There was also another reason for the conflict given by respondent such as responsibility of one or more persons for the same job, lack or awareness about his or her responsibility. This indicates that even if there were a various source of conflict, work over load and communication gap to resolve conflict were the major reasons for conflict among employees of the organization.

In addition to employee's response, the information from manager by interview shows that the management faces different conflicts from the employees. These are on the question of salary increment and decreasing work over load, dual responsibility given by management, timeliness of important materials for the activities delegated and so on.

Conditions of conflict avoidance and resolution techniques of conflict

According to the information observed (90%) of the respondents believed that conflict occurring between or among employees in an organization were avoided and (10%) of the respondents were believed that the conflict could not avoided. This implies that nearly all employees think on the avoidance of conflict with in their organization. Therefore the manager may not face obstacle to wards employees attitude on conflict resolution through effective communication.

The study shows that (66.66%) of the respondents believed the conflict can avoid through discussion, (11.11%) of the respondents responded that conflict can be avoided through punishing the conflicting parties, on other hand , (16.66%) of the respondents responded that they can avoid conflict that occur between employees by putting the conflicting parties to he middle point, this is also called compromising the two parties and the remaining (2.33%) of the respondents responded that the conflict is avoided by going to court. This shows that the employees of Samara logia town municipality gave more value to discussion for resolving conflict.

In addition to the above response of employees, the manager answer shows that management tried to solve the conflicts that occur among employees as it can possible peace fully. It was based on the rules and regulations of the government. This implies that even if the management thinks that conflict between employees' decreases or reduces the over all service given by the organization, the emphasis they gave to communication in resolving conflict is very little.

Conditions of discussion about the conflict situation

The study reveals (40%) of the respondents responded that there was no any discussion concerning the conflict that occurs in their organization and the remaining (60%) of the respondents replied that there were discussion particulates to conflict resolution. The information shows that although there was a better discussion in organization, most of employees agreed on existence of discussion concerning conflict within organization. This shows that the management and employees do have enough attention on discussion about conflict situation.

Regarding the information in the above table item (50%) of the respondents responded that there was discussion about conflict once in a month, (16.66%) of the respondents replied that there was discussion twice a month and the remaining (25%) of the respondents responded that there was discussion about conflict conditions once in a year and (8.33%) of the respondent responded that there was discussion conflict conditions not scheduled to discussion conflicts. This shows that

from the respondents who agreed on the existence of discussion, discussion were at least once in month in the Samara logia town municipality.

The study reveals that (50%) of the respondents replied there was no discussion regarding conflict because of the management's less attention, (25%) of the respondents responded that the reason for no conflict discussion was that it had no any use and no contribution to the organization, the remaining (12.5%) of the respondent responded that they had not enough time to deal with such things and (12.5%) of the respondent responded that if other specify which such things. This shows that the management was not giving enough attention to the consequence of conflict to the organizational effectiveness.

Managers and employees relationship conditions

Management can have communication with subordinates on the purpose to assign goals, provide job instructions inform underlining feedback about performance. This type of relationship between managers and employee is down ward communication on the other hand subordinate can communicate with their managers to provide feedback, to prepare performance reports etc and this type of communication between two parties is called upward communication

Information regarding the above table indicates that (80%) of the respondents replied that grievances of employees was answered slowly or such service is low from the management, and (20%) of respondents responded that the condition of employees grievances was answered in medium level. This indicates that even if there were some level of a management response for employees' grievances or complaint, the majority (80%) of employees answer shows there were a problem on the response of management.

From the result of interview with top manager of Samara logia town municipality, communication between the management and employees is relatively low. The management communicates with employees at different issues such issues as to introduce and communicate on a new government policies, to set annual budget of the municipality and its workers, to appoint employees some specific jobs, and communicate when some employees give their compliment for the management. The researcher can conclude from mass of employees and the manager of the municipality that there was a problem on the response of management.

Conditions of communication in the organization

Communication in an organization is the process of transmitting decisions and other information from one member or one part of an organization to other. In fact, there can be no organization without communication (Stephen .P. Robbins; 1994:242).

Conditions of communication in the organization

The study shows that (80%) of the respondents responded that they think communication plays a role in resolving conflicts that occurred between employees in an organization and the remaining (20%) of the respondents replied that communication does not play any role in conflict resolution process. Therefore, this implies that nearly all employees believe communication role in resolving conflict is a good awareness by employees of the company regarding communication use in resolving conflict in the municipality.

The study reveals that, (65%) of the respondents responded that communication in their organization was sufficient and the remaining (35%) of the respondent responded that the communication process in their organization was not sufficient. This shows that there is relatively sufficient communication as the majority respondents' answer.

The study reveals that (53.846%) of the respondents replied that the reason behind poor (not sufficient) communication between employees was lack of attention from management and employees, (23.0769%) of the respondents responded that the reasons regarding not sufficient communication among employees was lack of awareness about its use and the remaining (23.0769%) of the respondents replied that because of the attitudinal differences of employees on the communication. Therefore, we can generalize from this there were various reasons behind poor communication of employees of Samara logia town municipality and from those reasons lack of attention and lack of awareness regarding communication use were the major for not sufficient communication of employees in Samara logia town municipality. The study reveals that, (71.4285%) of the respondents responded that the role of communication in resolving

conflict is medium. Comparatively, (14.2857%) of the respondents responded that the role of communication on resolving conflict was low and the remaining (14.2857%) of the respondent responded that communication had low role in resolving conflict. From this, the researcher can conclude that, even if there were relatively sufficient communication in organization, the role of communication in resolving conflict was not as such high regarding the majority (85.71%) of respondent response.

Communication role and its constraints

Success in organization is dependent to a great degree up on the ability of the manager to understand other people. Managers can understand their employees through proper communication (Endalachew, Yasichelal and Tadiwos; 2006:66). Almost all conflicts involve communication problems, as both a cause and an effect. Misunderstanding, resulting from poor communication can easily cause a conflict or make it worse (Stewart and Sylvia; 2006:212). The study reveals that (60%) of the respondents responded that they have high relationship with their supervisors, (30%) of the respondents replied that they had high relationship with their co-workers and the remaining (10%) of the respondents responded that their relationship was with their subordinates. This shows that almost half of employees were highly interact with their superiors in their day-to-day activity. Therefore they may face conflict with their superiors.

The study reveals that (45%) of respondents responded that they were gave more value for accomplishing ordered work, (15%) of the respondents responded that they were gave more value to communication roles of resolving conflict, (30%) of the respondent replied that they were gave more value to communication for discussing and the remaining (10%) of the respondents responded that they were gave more value for communication to give command or order. This implies that followed by their primarily activity of accomplish order work; the respondents respond more on resolving conflict. Therefore, conflicts were a problem for the organization.

The study reveals that (70%) of the respondents responded that attitude difference on communication is the most constraint for communication not to achieve its objectives, to (15%) of the respondents replied that cultural difference was a constraint to communication and the remaining (10%) of respondents responded that language difference was the greatest constraint to communication. In addition, (10%) of respondents responded that the shortage employees and the multiple of one employee is a constraint for not to achieve communication goal (resolving conflict).

Conclusion

- ✓ The largest part of employees faces conflict with other employees of their organization with the major reasons of work over load and communication gap to resolve conflict. This implies that there were conflict and the sources of conflict were from structural factors.
- ✓ Employees think on the avoidance of conflict within their organization and they gave more value for discussion from the resolution technique of communication. Therefore, if the manager communicates employees effectively, he may not face obstacle/problem towards employees' attitude on conflict resolution.
- ✓ Majority employees agree on non-existence of discussion and they put a major reason for this was management less attention. This indicates that the management was not give attention for the consequence of conflict to the organizational effectiveness.
- ✓ Less response of manager to employees grievances or complaint had a problem as a majority of respondent response and also from manager answer by interview. Therefore, we can say that management was not given enough value on employees' grievances or complaint.
- ✓ Majority of employees believed that communication plays role in resolving conflict. This shows that there was a good awareness of effective communication role.
- ✓ Employees regarding communication use in resolving conflict in the municipality.

- ✓ As the response of majority respondents, communication in their organization was sufficient. On other hand, from the large number of respondents answer, the communication role in resolving conflict was less. This shows that even if these were relatively sufficient communication in organization, communication role in resolving conflict is not as such high.
- ✓ As shown in the study, almost half of employees were highly interact with their supervisors in their day-to-day activity; therefore, they may face conflict with their superiors.
- ✓ Employees gave more value for resolving conflict from conflict roles followed by their primarily activity, accomplish ordered work this shows that there were conflict in organization.
- ✓ Differences in attitude towards communication were the major factor that affect communication role to not achieve its goals (resolving conflict) this shows that there were pessimistic employees within the municipality.

Recommendations

- ✓ The majority of employees face conflict because of different factors that lead to a decline in communication process. So the manager is advised to manage it
- ✓ Use conflict resolution technique such as:
 - **Logical** ; if there is no clear winner and loser and if conflict takes much time.
 - **Collaboration**; if the conflicting members are trained in problem solving and if they have common goal.
 - **Arbitration**; if the conflicting parties are volunteers to accept arbitrator decision.
 - **Punishment**; if there should be penalty for the purpose of eliminating or correcting undesirable behavior.
- ✓ It is my strongly believe that conflict can be overcome through discussion and for this, communication plays role. Therefore the management is advised to use the positive attitude of employees to communicate effectively on conflict resolution process that is important for positive change of organization.
- ✓ The less attention from management is the major reasons for non-existence of discussion that may leads to conflict. Therefore, the management is advised to give enough attention to discussion and make effective communication.
- ✓ The response of management for employees' grievances is not appropriate to solve conflict. As a result, management is advised to give enough attention for employees' criticism and accept employees' comments and criticism towards organizational activities by implementing effective communication since employees feel less satisfied and lose a sense of belongingness to their organization.
- ✓ Communication within organization was sufficient. so the management is advised to encourage this sufficient communication in to more effective, that result to organizational productivity.
- ✓ Role of communication in resolving conflict was less in the municipality that may decline the quality of service. For that reasons management is advice to use effective communication that is the corner stone of strong and healthy relationship.
- ✓ Difference in attitude of employees towards communication was the major factor that affect communication role not to achieve its goals (resolving conflict). Thus, the management advised to encourage the employee's attitude on positive thinking of communication.

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