

An Assessment of Conflict Management Practice at St. Mary's University

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Abstract

The purpose of this research is to assess conflict management practice of St. Mary's University. In order to conduct the study the researcher used simple random and judgmental sampling technique for selecting 184 employees and the management, the faculty heads and members of the discipline committee respectively. Questionnaire and interview were used as methods of data collection and the reviews of the revised discipline manual, documents of exit interview and decisions of the discipline committee as a secondary data. The study used descriptive research design for the purpose of analyzing and interpreting the data. As a result, the major findings of the research are as follows, the dominant type of conflict that prevail at SMU is job related conflict and the main source of work related conflict at SMU is shortage of resources. The major conflict management style used by SMU is compromising and the frequently used alternative conflict management system is using disciplinary committee. The commitment of the top management in resolving or managing workplace conflict is average or moderate. In order to manage conflict properly, the management should be equipped with techniques or styles of conflict management besides that the management must encourage optimal resource utilization to the extent possible in order to avoid work related conflicts.

Introduction

For an organization to operate properly, creating and maintaining healthy relationship is pivotal. Because we human beings are social animals, we normally interact with one another, as a result of these relationships, conflict is expected or it is unavoidable. The management bears the full responsibility in order to make sure that the relationship within the organization is healthy and peaceful. Conflict or disagreements might even become personal and affect the personal relationship between employers and employees and the management.

Conflict in the workplace can be damaging for everybody involved. The conflict can be between employees or between employees and the management. Managing conflicts immediately could be in the best interest of the conflicting parties in particular and the organization in general. If there is the platform to solve the dispute or conflict at the organization level, it will be advantageous to the organization as well as the employees. However, when we come to the reality, much attention is not given to managing conflicts at the organization level internally.

Conflict may be defined as “the interaction of interdependent people who perceive opposition of goals, aims, and values, and who see the other party as potentially interfering with the realization of these goals (Putnam and Poole, 1987) Anytime people work together, conflict is a part of ‘doing business’. Recent research has investigated the different effects of conflict by differentiating conflict into two types: task conflict, and relationship or interpersonal conflict. Task conflict refers to the opposing views of team members towards the task, including viewpoints, ideas, and thoughts. Relationship conflict is seen as interpersonal incompatibilities, which

typically include tension, animosity, and annoyance (Jia-Chi, 2010). Once conflict is happened it may be possible to use different mechanisms to address the conflict. Some of the mechanisms could be integrating, obliging, dominating, avoiding and compromising (Rahim, 1983).

St. Mary's University, established in 1998, is a prominent Ethiopian institution of higher learning located in Addis Ababa. The University is private, young, and dynamic. From the outset, it set up as its mission the provision of quality instruction for its students, research works, academic material production, as well as professional consultancy for the growing needs of Ethiopia and its citizens. Recognizing the complexity of the current world and the multi-ethnic heritage of Ethiopia, the university college has promoted from the start an atmosphere of openness, tolerance, mutual respect and cooperation. At present, St. Mary's University has four main campuses in Addis Ababa, 13 major Distance Education Regional centers, and 160 Coordination offices spreading throughout the country. The University has over 200 full time academic staff, close to six thousand students in the undergraduate conventional mode of learning, and about thirty thousand students enrolled in distance education programs. It also has close to 2000 students in its graduate programs. Eight graduate programs are run in partnership with Indira Gandhi National Open University. These programs include Business Administration, Public Administration, Library and Information Science, Sociology, Economics, Commerce, Rural Development and Political Science in the distance mode of learning. In the conventional mode of learning, SMU is accredited for two graduate programs; MBA and HRM. Expanding its services, St. Mary's University has also opened a K-12 school that would widen its reach to general education.

As part of its commitment to community services, the university has organized and sponsored national annual conferences focusing on private higher education since 2003. In addition, it also publishes three bi-annual journals in three disciplines; Agriculture, Business, and Law. Almost all the articles in the proceedings and journals are made available in its website at www.smuc.edu.et. St. Mary's University is a member of the Association of African Universities and an associate member of the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education.

Statement of the Problem

Conflict is expected as far as there is human relationship at the workplace or anywhere so; there should be a condition where such conflict could be managed. Handling conflict cases by discipline committee might be one essential component of conflict management, however, it is not the only mechanism. If conflicts are not handled properly, there could be costs. The costs could be costs to the organization, costs to the employees and costs to the clients (Buss, 2009). Though St. Mary's University has introduced the revised version of employee's disciplinary manual in 2005, which is one essential feature of conflict management, having the manual alone may not be sufficient to address the problem. The manual does not address issues like alternative dispute resolution mechanisms, integrating, compromising etc.

Rejection of proper management of workplace conflicts, could results poor performance, absence from work place, physical as well as psychological stress, loss of interest in the job (diminished performance), hostility, poor motivation and morale, misallocation of resources, discomfort, misunderstanding, and disruption of relationships to the collapse of organizations (Wasita,2007)

The preliminary interview held with the chairperson of the discipline committee revealed that, work place conflicts are increasing from time to time at distance and open learning, for example, in 2013 in the last two months five disciplinary cases were handled by the disciplinary committee. This did not include those conflicts which are not reported or handled by the different departments without being reported to the discipline committee. If 5 cases happened in the last two months it might be possible to project possible increase of conflicts. Furthermore, for the purpose of identifying the statement of the problem and formulating the research question, the researcher interviewed members of the management just to know how conflict is managed or handled by the management of the University. What the researcher understood from the interview is that the top management did not give much attention to conflict management. In addition even though there is recognition of the problem, the way the conflict managed differs between individuals. In addition it is not resolved timely.

The preliminary investigation showed that some of the problems identified in the literature in relation to conflict are also happened in St. Mary's University. For example, there could be hostility, termination of contract of employment etc. Though conflict seems dysfunctional, there could be conditions where conflict might become functional. For example groups make better decisions where they started in disagreement rather than agreement (Schulz-Hardt et al, 2002).

Research Question

In order to address the above problems, the research addressed the following questions.

- What are the dominantly prevailing types of conflicts at SMU?

- What are the types of conflict management styles adopted by the management of SMU?
- How do employees perceive the top management's level of commitment to resolve conflicts on the spot?

Objectives of the Study

General Objective

The general objective is to assess the conflict management practice of St. Mary's University.

Specific Objectives

The study was intended to achieve the following specific objectives:

- Identify the types of conflicts that are predominantly occurring at St. Mary's University.
- Examine the relevance of the conflict management styles adopted by the management of St. Mary's University.
- Examine the perception of employees about the top management's level of commitment to resolve conflicts on time.

Delimitation of the Study

This research is intended to show the need for management of workplace conflicts with in St. Mary's University. Because St. Mary's University has different sections and department located at different locations, this research is restricted to management of workplace conflicts occurred at main campus and distance and open division. Because it is not possible to address all the conflicts happened during the different periods or years, the research focused on the issue of managing conflicts in the last two years i.e., from 2012 to 2013. Similarly the research included members of the top management, faculty heads, members of the discipline committee and employees.

Significance of the Study

The management of St. Mary's University is the prime beneficiary of this research. Because if workplace conflicts are managed properly, it helps to minimize or avoid costs, reduce absenteeism, avoid the disruption of work, create and maintain friendly relationship between the management and the employees, etc. Employees of St. Mary's University would be benefitted indirectly since the research has identified reasons for and effects of workplace conflict. Similarly as far as the researcher's knowledge is concerned, nothing is written on conflict management especially with regard to St. Mary's University, so this research might add up to the existing literature and even might serve as a spring board for conducting further researches.

Research Design and Methodology

Research Design

The research is descriptive. Because the researcher is interested to get information on the current condition of conflict management and describe the existing condition, the researcher preferred to use descriptive research design. The researcher analyzed the existing employees discipline manual, decisions given by the discipline committee, the responses given by the participants of the research and exit interview followed by possible recommendations.

Population and Sampling

The population is the management and employees of St. Mary's University at the main campus and distance and open division since it was not possible to address all employees due to shortage of time, the researcher used sampling. The population size is 612. This figure includes only permanent and contract employees. The research has included the top management,

faculty heads, the discipline committee and the employees. So since the top management, the faculty heads and members of the discipline committee are few in number, the research included all and employed particularly non-probability sampling i.e., judgmental sampling technique. However, since the size of the employees is large, the researcher used probability sampling. In order to give equal chance to the respondents, the researcher used simple random sampling. Out of the total number of employees, the researcher involved 30 % (184) of them.

Sources of data

The researcher employed both primary and secondary data. The primary data was information gathered through questionnaire and interview. The secondary data was the discipline manual, decisions of the discipline committee, exit interview, related literature and the like.

Instrument of data collection

Data was collected using questionnaire and interview. The questionnaire was a combination of both open ended and closed questions. The questionnaire was designed for the employees where as the interview was to the top management, faculty heads and members of the discipline committee. Secondary data was collected from exit interview, the revised discipline manual and decisions of the discipline committee.

Methods of data analysis

The researcher used narration for the purpose of information gathered via interview and percentage and/or mean for the purpose of questionnaire.

Data Presentation, Analysis and Interpretation

The analysis part includes the primary sources and from secondary sources. The number of employees in St. Mary's University is 612. This figure includes only employees at Mexico campus, distance and open division head office and the testing center. It was proposed to address 30% (184) employees as respondents to this study. Accordingly 184 questionnaires were distributed and collected. The data obtained through the distributed questionnaire are presented in tabular form and analyzed using mean and percentage values.

Table 1: Work related conflicts at St. Mary's University

Causes of conflict	very high		High		Average/moderate		low		Very low		Total	Mean
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%		
Shortage of resource	16	8.7	40	21.47	60	32.61	48	26.08	20	10.87	184	2.91
Conflicting ideas	4	2.1	28	15.22	56	30.43	60	32.61	36	19.56	184	2.49
Late coming	4	2.1	36	19.56	56	30.43	44	23.91	44	23.91	184	2.52
Early departure from work	0	0	28	15.22	36	19.56	44	23.91	76	41.30	184	2.1
Failure to do ones job/task properly	4	2.22	32	17.77	20	11.11	36	20	88	48.9	180	2.04
Coming to work while drunkard	4	2.1	0	0	4	2.17	0	0	176	95.65	184	1.13

Table 1 above reveals work related conflicts. Respondents were asked to show to what extent shortage of resources, conflicting ideas, late coming to work, early departure from work, failure to do ones job/task properly, coming to work while drunkard cause work related conflict. This shows the fact that shortage of resources, conflicting ideas is almost moderate or average cause of conflict. It is neither a serious or minor cause of conflict.

Late coming is a low cause of conflict. It implies that the larger portion of the employees do not perceive late coming as a serious cause of work place conflict at SMU and the larger portion of the employees do not perceive early departure from work as causing work place conflict at SMU.

In addition respondents were asked to show the relative worth of failure to do job or task properly in causing work related conflict at SMU. This shows the fact that failure to do job or task properly is a low cause of conflict. It implies that the larger portion of the employees do not perceive failure to do job or task properly as causing work place conflict at SMU. Moreover coming to work while drunkard might contribute to work related conflict at SMU. This shows the fact that, though there is the problem, coming to work while drunkard is a low cause of conflict. It implies that the larger portion of the employees do not perceive coming to work while drunkard is causing work place conflict at SMU.

Table 2: Conflicts created due to relationship of employees.

Causes of conflict	very high		high		Average		low		Very low		Total	Mean
	No	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%		
Hate	4	2.22	12	6.66	28	15.55	28	15.55	108	60	180	1.75
Nagging	4	2.27	12	6.82	44	25	24	13.63	92	52.27	176	1.93
Anger	4	2.27	24	13.63	48	27.27	40	22.73	60	34.09	176	2.27
Miscommunication/misunderstanding	8	4.4	16	8.88	36	20	60	33.33	60	33.33	180	2.18
Ignorance	0	0	16	8.69	16	8.69	40	21.74	112	60.87	184	1.65
Back-biting/gossip	8	4.35	36	19.56	20	10.87	24	13.04	96	52.17	184	2.11

Table 2 above reveals conflicts due to relationship of employees. Respondents were asked to show the extent to which hate, nagging, anger, miscommunication, ignorance, back-biting/gossip might cause conflict due to relationship of employees. This shows all source of conflict that is hate, nagging, anger, miscommunication, ignorance and back-biting or gossip are a low cause of conflict it indicates that the larger portion of the employees do not perceive the above factors as causing relationship related conflict at SMU.

Table 3: Types or kinds of work place conflict

Types or kinds of conflict	very high		high		Average/moderate		Low		Very low		Total	Mean
	No	%	No	%	No.	%	No	%	No	%		
Task or job related conflict	8	4.34	20	10.86	68	36.95	52	28.26	36	19.56	184	2.52
Relationship based conflict	8	4.65	0	0	32	18.60	88	51.16	44	25.58	172	2.07

Table 3 above reveals types or kinds of conflict. As can be seen from the table task or job related conflict and relationship based conflict is not a major type or kind of conflict at SMU. But compared to relationship based conflict, task related type of conflict is relatively the main or dominant type or kind of conflict at St. Mary's University.

Table 4: Causes or sources of conflict

Causes or sources of conflict	very high		High		Average/moderate		low		Very low		Total	Mean
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%		
Conflicting needs	16	8.7	16	8.7	48	26.08	48	26.08	56	30.43	184	2.39

Conflicting styles	8	4.35	24	13.04	48	26.08	56	30.43	48	26.09	184	2.39
Conflicting perception	4	2.22	20	11.11	48	26.67	72	40	36	20	180	2.36
Conflicting goals	8	4.35	12	6.52	36	19.56	76	41.3	52	28.26	184	2.17
Conflicting pressure	4	2.17	24	13.04	40	21.74	52	28.26	64	34.78	180	2.19
Conflicting roles	24	13.04	32	17.39	40	21.74	36	19.56	52	28.26	184	2.67
Different personal values	8	4.35	12	6.52	32	17.39	64	34.78	68	36.95	184	2.06
Unpredictable policies	8	4.35	32	17.39	36	19.56	60	32.61	48	26.08	184	2.41

Eight sources of conflict are listed in the table. In item 1 of table 4 Respondents were asked to show the extent to which conflicting needs, conflicting styles, conflicting perception, conflicting goal, conflicting pressure, different personal values and unpredictable policies are source of conflict and conflicting and all are a low source of conflict.

According to the mean value the first or the predominant sources or causes of conflict is conflicting roles and the least source or cause of conflict is different personal values. In terms of their gravity, sources or causes of conflict are ranked as follows: Conflicting roles, unpredictable policies, conflicting needs and conflicting styles, conflicting perception, conflicting pressure, conflicting goals and different personal values.

Table 5: Conflict management styles used by the management of St. Mary's University.

Styles of conflict management	very high		High		Average/mode rate		low		Very low		Total	Mean
	No	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%		
Integrating	28	16.28	12	6.98	56	32.56	36	20.93	40	23.26	172	2.72

Obliging	16	9.52	20	11.90	52	30.95	40	23.81	40	23.81	168	2.59
Dominating	8	4.55	36	20.45	48	27.27	28	15.90	56	31.82	176	2.5
Avoiding	12	6.97	36	20.93	28	16.28	56	32.56	40	23.25	172	2.56
Compromising	36	20.45	20	11.36	48	27.27	40	22.73	32	18.18	176	2.93

Table 5 above reveals styles of conflict management. Integrating, obliging, dominating, avoiding and compromising are the five mechanisms of conflict management. Respondents were asked to show the extent to which integrating, obliging, dominating, avoiding and compromising are used as a mechanism of conflict management. This shows the fact that integrating and compromising are an average or moderate mechanism of conflicting management. Dominating avoiding and obliging are a low conflict management style larger portion of the employees do not perceive them as the predominant style of conflict management at SMU. However, this does not mean that they are not used as a system of conflict management at SMU.

Table 6: Alternative conflict management systems used by the management of St. Mary's University.

Styles of conflict management	very high		High		Average/moderate		Low		Very low		Total	Mean
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%		
Integrating	28	16.28	12	6.98	56	32.56	36	20.93	40	23.26	172	2.72
Obliging	16	9.52	20	11.90	52	30.95	40	23.81	40	23.81	168	2.59
Dominating	8	4.55	36	20.45	48	27.27	28	15.90	56	31.82	176	2.5
Avoiding	12	6.97	36	20.93	28	16.28	56	32.56	40	23.25	172	2.56
Compromising	36	20.45	20	11.36	48	27.27	40	22.73	32	18.18	176	2.93

Three mechanisms of conflict management are identified in the table. The first mechanism is arbitration. Respondents were asked to show the extent to which arbitration is used as a mechanism of conflict management. Though

arbitration is used as a system of conflict management, it is not as such a popular system of conflict management as SMU. The second was conciliation according to the respondents it is a low system of conflict management. It implies that the larger portion of the employees do not perceive conciliation as the predominant system of conflict management at SMU. Whereas using discipline committee is an average or moderate conflict management system.

So according to the respondents, the predominant system of conflict management used by St. Mary's University is discipline committee. However, according to the interviewees using discipline committee is the least option. The most favored mechanism is bringing the parties together to settle their difference through discussion.

Table 7: The willingness of the top management in giving attention or due consideration to work place conflicts

The willingness of the top management in giving attention or due consideration to work place conflicts	Very high		High		Average or moderate		Low		Very low		Total	Mean
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%		
	36	20.45	24	13.63	60	34.09	36	20.45	20	11.36		

Table 7 above reveals the willingness of the top management in giving attention to workplace conflicts. So according to the respondents the willingness of the top management in addressing workplace conflicts is average or moderate. It is neither low nor high. The position of the respondents and the interviewees on the issue of willingness of the top management is different. According to the respondents, the willingness of the management of St. Mary's University is average or moderate. However, the interviewees mentioned the willingness of the top management in addressing workplace conflicts.

Table 8: The commitment of the top management in giving attention or due consideration to work place conflicts

The commitment of the top management in managing or resolving to work place conflicts	Very high		High		Average or moderate		Low		Very low		Total	Mean
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%		
	40	22.72	24	13.63	68	38.63	32	18.18	12	6.81		

Table 8 above reveals the commitment of the top management in managing or resolving workplace conflicts. So according to the respondents the commitment of the top management in addressing workplace conflicts is average or moderate. It is neither low nor high. However, according to the interviewees the top management is fully committed in managing workplace conflicts. So there is gap or disparity between the respondents and the interviewees.

Table 9: Evaluation of the capacity the top management in managing or resolving work place conflict.

The commitment of the top management in managing or resolving to work place conflicts	Very high		High		Average or moderate		Low		Very low		Total	Mean
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%		
	40	22.72	24	13.63	68	38.63	32	18.18	12	6.81		

Table 9 above reveals the capacity of the top management in managing or resolving workplace conflict. The mean value is 3.07. The mean value is average or moderate. So according to the respondents the capacity of the top management in addressing workplace conflicts is average or moderate. It is neither low nor high.

Table 10: The potential problems to be occurred if workplace conflicts are not managed properly.

Potential problems	very high		high		Average/moderate		low		Very low		Total	Mean
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%		
Reduced work or performance result	60	33.33	68	37.77	16	8.88	28	15.55	8	4.44	180	3.8
Lack of or reduced motivation	76	43.18	56	31.81	28	15.90	8	4.54	8	4.54	176	4.04
Absence from work	32	17.77	40	22.22	56	31.11	32	17.77	20	11.11	180	3.17
Stress	32	17.77	76	42.22	40	22.22	24	13.33	8	4.44	180	3.55
Lack of trust on colleagues	52	28.88	56	31.11	28	15.55	28	15.55	16	8.88	180	3.55
Lack of confidence	40	22.72	16	9.09	72	40.90	32	18.18	16	9.09	176	3.18
Lack of proper communication with colleagues	60	33.33	56	31.11	36	20	16	8.88	12	6.66	180	3.75
Termination of contract of employment	60	33.33	48	26.66	24	13.33	24	13.33	24	13.33	180	3.53
Suing colleagues	40	22.22	36	20	28	15.55	36	20	40	22.22	180	3
Theft	28	15.90	12	6.81	12	6.81	24	13.63	100	56.81	176	2.11
Failure to give due attention to work/job	44	25	56	31.82	24	13.63	16	9.09	36	20.45	176	3.32

Table 10 above reveals potential problems that may exist if conflict is not managed properly. Eleven potential problems are indentified. Respondents were asked to show the extent to which reduced work or performance result, lack of or reduced motivation, absence from work, stress, lack of trust on colleagues, lack of confidence, lack of proper communication with colleagues, termination of contract of employment, suing colleagues, theft and failure to give due attention to work/job could be a potential problem and they reveled that reduced performance, reduced motivation, lack of proper communication with colleagues are a high potential problem. It

implies that the larger portion of the employees do perceive the above factors as a major potential problem at SMU.

On the other hand absence, stress, lack of trust, lack of confidence on colleagues, termination of contract of employment, suing colleagues and failure to give due attention to work are an average or moderate potential problem. Where as theft is a low potential problem at SMU. However, it does not mean that theft is not a potential problem even though the majority of the respondents did not perceive it as a potential problem.

Interview

Interview was conducted with the top management, faculty heads and members of the discipline committee. The outcome of the interview is summarized as follows.

The main causes of conflict are failure of employees to do their job unless they ordered to do so, lack of cooperation, failure to act in accordance with the guidelines of the university, failure to report students grade properly(particularly instructors), failure to arrive class on time(instructors), absenteeism(instructors), improper student handling, failure to honor work ethics, failure to discharge duties and responsibility, failure to give value to work, failure to understand job responsibility properly. And the mechanisms used to manage work place conflicts: according to the response of the interviewee, are identifying the conflicting parties and allow them to discuss the matter in front of their boss, trying to settle the matter with colleagues, writing memo in accordance with the guideline if it is possible to correct the problem, oral and written warning, if it is not possible to settle the conflict by the conflicting parties themselves or by the boss, the case will be referred to the discipline committee, taking the proper disciplinary measure in

accordance with the discipline manual and sometimes the case might be handled by ordinary courts.

The best system of resolving workplace conflicts: The mechanism being utilized by the university is trying to bring the conflicting parties together and resolve their difference through dialogue or discussion. Even though it is possible to handle the conflict by other mechanisms like for example, using discipline committee or the boss giving a certain decision, it will never bring a long run effect. In order to bring a long run effect the parties should try to resolve it through discussion or if is not possible settle it via arbitration. One interviewee said giving advice and warning is the best mechanism. Though the interviewees raised the need for settling disputes through discussion and arbitration, the respondents rated the contribution of arbitration low. In order to bring a long lasting effect, the conflict should be resolved or managed by the parties themselves.

The importance of the skill of the top management in managing or resolving workplace conflicts: all the interviewees replied unequivocally that skill of managing or resolving workplace conflict is crucial or pivotal.

Taking training on managing workplace conflicts: all the interviewees replied that they did not take training directly on conflict management. Whether the top management gives due attention to workplace conflicts: all the interviewees unanimously replied that the top management gives attention to workplace conflicts. According to one interviewee the university top management sometimes knowingly or unknowingly takes instant measures; these measures might expose the university to unnecessary risks. Though taking an instant measure is important, it is necessary to consider the legal impact as well. The top management is fully committed in managing

workplace conflict; however, the respondents rated the commitment of the top management average or moderate.

The effectiveness of the top management in managing workplace conflicts: The interviewees replied that the top management is effective. According to one interview, there are conditions where the management handle conflicts themselves instead of referring to the discipline committee. The other interviewee stated the effectiveness of the management in percentage which is 75%.

What should the top management do to manage workplace conflicts: The interviewees replied that resources should be available, preparing a good canteen, improving salary, early management intervention when conflicts happened, trying to reconcile the conflicting parties, arranging a discussion forum with the employees, closing administrative gaps which are causes or sources of conflict, listening bosses and other employees equally, introducing a proper mechanism to ensure responsibility and accountability, and giving decision based on a proper evidence

The potential problems intertwined with workplace conflicts: the interviewees listed possible problems. These are salary, lack of adequate resource, lack of team spirit, lack of belongingness, scarifying productivity or performance, lack of job satisfaction, termination of contract of employment, legal cases which might cost the university in terms of cash and the image of the university.

The secondary sources are the revised employees discipline regulation, exit interview and its assessment or analysis and the cases handled by the discipline committee. In the revised regulation the types of offences and the measures to be taken are included. The types of disciplinary measures range

from oral warning to suspension and termination of contract of employment. Most disciplinary measures are to be taken by the discipline committee. The discipline regulation does not include other mechanisms of conflict resolution like arbitration and conciliation. On the other hand an exit interview and assessment is conducted by the human resource office. The exit interview and assessment includes the periods from August 2005 E.C. to January 2006 E.C. The exit interview was conducted on 27 employees. Out of the 27 employees who terminated their contract of employment 7.4 % left the university due to inconvenience and 7.4 % terminated their contract of employment due to conflict with their bosses. This shows the existence of workplace conflict in the university.

From May 2004 E.C to August 2005 E.C. around 10 cases on 13 employees were handled by the discipline committee. Some of the offences committed by those employees whose cases were handled by the discipline committee are failure to do ones job, absence from work, falsifying grade reports, late coming to office or failure to honor working hour, etc. The punishment imposed by the discipline committee ranges from written warning to suspension.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Conclusion

Task or job related conflict is the dominant prevailing type of conflict at SMU. Compromising integrating obliging avoiding and dominating are the conflict management styles adopted by the management of SMU in a decreasing order. So in terms of mean value the highest is compromising and the least is dominating. So the dominant style of conflict management adopted by the management of SMU is compromising. On the other hand the predominant other conflict management systems are arbitration, conciliation

and discipline committee in an increasing order. There is gap between the respondents and the interviewees' on the issue of the commitment of the top management in resolving work place conflicts. According to the interviewees the top management is fully committed whereas according the respondents the commitment of the top management is average or moderate. Even in terms of percentage the commitment of the top management in resolving or managing workplace conflicts is average or moderate.

Recommendation

- Optimally utilize resource to the extent possible in order to avoid work related conflicts.
- Do not assign more than one role at the same time. Similarly before the management introduces a certain policy, it should consult the employees in order to create awareness.
- Revise discipline manual and include other conflict management strategies.
- Provide conflict management training for the concerned body.
- Minimize the gap between the employees and the top management on the capacity, willingness and commitment of the top management in managing workplace conflicts by arranging discussion and regular meeting with the employees.

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