7HR01 STRATEGIC EMPLOYMENT RELATIONS

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Task 1

AC 1.1 Critical Analysis of Style in our organization

Businesses in the modern world have embraced quite various types of employees to increase productivity and enhance profitability. The unitarist approach perceives employment as a relationship between members of a group with a shared goal. On other hand, the pluralist approach considers employment as a strategic relationship between strangers. Marxists perceive a conflict between employers and employees to be inevitable and therefore, stay prepared in solving issues immediately (Gold, 2021). In the organization, Chalhoub Group, there is an adoption of a Marxist perspective toward the relationship between employees. It provides the advantage of being ready to solve conflicts as it is considered that conflicts can occur at some point in time due to differences in opinion or regarding change management (Akhter, Nahar and Dolon, 2018). As per Marxists, employee relations with the employer are a product of the capitalist society (Gold, 2021). To generate profit and ensure business success, there is a need of inducing changes in the working structure as well as technologies. It takes employees to learn new methods of working and some might not fit well within the changed scenarios.

This has been considered by Chalhoub Group and since the conflict will bound to happen, it is required to resolve them at the grassroots level which is also done within the organization. As per the Marxist approach, the concept of pluralism is unreal as industrial disputes, as well as class conflicts, are inevitable for the circular functioning of the industry (Castellas, Stubbs and Ambrosini, 2019). In Chalhoub, there is a definite role played by trade unions as they make effort to improve the position of employees within the capitalist system. Trade Unions strike to prevent the exploitation of employees for capital reasons. In some other organizations, there is following of pluralistic perception of employee-employer relations. Similarity with the Marxist approach is that both of them consider the conflict between employee and employer as inevitable (Aruldosset al., 2021). However, as per pluralistic perception, each organization in this era of globalization consists of employees from different cultural backgrounds, work ethics, and social as well as religious beliefs. It leads to a difference in thinking and approaching a given task within a team (Bulińska-Stangrecka and Bagieńska, 2021). There is a firm in which my friend works and as per my idea, it is following a pluralistic approach. This is due to the reason that there is evidence of management playing the role of mediator between different interest groups.

In a pluralistic approach, Trade union plays a necessary role as they balance the power between management and employees. This is unlike the Marxist approach adopted in Chalhoub where through strikes, the employer is made to balance the position of employees and give them the required remuneration. In the unitary approach, employees have conveyed the need for changing technologies and adapting them by giving them future projections of profit-making. The unitary approach is followed in some organizations where management is considered as the one in control and is making decisions (Bulińska-Stangrecka and Bagieńska, 2021). It perceives that there are shared goals between employees and teamwork is given importance rather than individual objectives fulfilment. The difference with the Marxist perspective is that strikes are considered

destructive and not necessary. Through a unitary perspective, employees are convinced and are removed away from socialism or unionism. It is also considered manipulative and exploitative to gain the maximum advantage for the employee group.

AC 1.2 Examples of Cooperation and Conflict

Several organizations believe that inherent conflict exists between employees and management due to fundamental disparities in their respective goals. However, some factors restrain requests for more compensation, for instance, the fact that most employees value job stability above all else. As a result, negotiating is a viable option for settling conflicts at work.

AC 1.3 Evaluation of employer strategies toward trade union

Workers who are unhappy with their treatment by management often join unions in the hope of improving their lot at work. Workers are more likely to be persuaded to join a union if they believe their employer is unfair, unresponsive, or providing bad working conditions, even though salary and benefits are frequently at the forefront of union organizing strategies (Kirton, 2019). The strategies which can be used by employers to manage unions have been provided below as follows:-

➢ Development and management of fair and consistent policies and practices are required to be encouraged.

➢ **"Open door management policies"** need to be practised and encouraged.

➢ Employees should be provided with their deserved compensation and benefits.

➢ The organization needs to gain employee trust and provide them with recognition and rewards.

As a result, the likelihood that workers would turn to unions for help is much reduced at **Chalhoub Group** because of the company's emphasis on fostering positive connections between management and staff and responding to staff issues. Throughout my working years, I have encountered that employers in this organization often conduct discussions with workers about why they do not need a union. They also tend to highlight the pre-existing policies, procedures, and culture of the company that helps it stand out as a great place to work. As Chalhoub followed a Marxist perspective, trade unions are required to present the opinion of employees and organize strikes in case the demands are fulfilled or a middle path is reached.

AC 1.4 Analysis of ways of Fostering a Positive environment

The ways by which people professionals can become maintainers of **"positive employment"** relations have been provided below as follows:

People professionals must ensure that a positive work environment and employment relations are maintained. This is possible through the help of monitoring the intra-team relationships between employees and asking for regular feedback from the team regarding any issues with workplace culture (Cooper et al., 2019). At times, the recruits are not able to express the challenges faced in working within a new team and leave the organization or get exploited (Mojab and Carpenter, 2019). It can be done through giving additional work pressure or sexual harassment based on gender or sexual preferences. People professionals need to have a 360-degree feedback

system so that such issues get monitored and corrective actions are taken to resolve the conflict as well as improve employee relationships (Pahos and Galanaki, 2019).

There is a need of improving the line of communication between employees from various departments and within the team also. A flat organizational culture can be maintained and there will be initiation of communication from senior members of the team to know whether there are any issues related to working with other team members (Richards, 2022). At times, due to not being able to have access to the hierarchy, the conflicts do not get resolved (Ozkeser, 2019). It is the responsibility of people professionals to engage in 1:1 conversation with employees so that the nature of the challenge can be known. Within Chalhoub Group, there is a need of having transparency in the workplace as it will lead to an increase in trust of the individuals in the employer as well as each other. Before any change management, the concerned stakeholders such as employees within that department need to be given reasons for the change as well as benefits for him or her on a long-term basis. Employee relations may be greatly improved, and a culture of cooperation rather than rivalry can be established through rewards and recognition of exceptional achievement.

Task 2

Section 1

AC 2.2 Impact of short-term competitive pressures on the practice of Employment relations at the organizational level

Impact of technological change

There is an impact of technological change felt in how the organization works and takes strategies to incorporate the advanced tools within the working process. It shapes the relations of the employer with a workforce as a change in technology in favour of them is well-accepted or else, it gets rejections (Himkiet al., 2022). For example, the adoption of ICT tools in the pandemic for the last two years has led to the accomplishment of tasks more collaboratively. It has helped in maintaining the same work process between employees working from home and also improved efficiencies of working as the time wasted in travelling to the office as well as going back home is saved. This has made many organizations in the IT service sector make work from home permanent or adopt a hybrid working culture. This has made the position of staff such as floor boys and office maintenance team redundant as there is no need of coming to the office on regular basis. The salary or wage can also be halved as they need to be in the office only on a certain number of days of the week. It has changed employee relations and might be the reason for them leaving the company.

At times, senior employees are not well-acquainted with the latest technologies, and adapting it might lead them to learn new techniques at an age where they prefer not to take any new inputs or improve performance for having a hike in the organization. In such a work culture in which personal interests are given importance rather than overall organizational objectives, conflict of interest takes place (McKibben, 2017). There is a need of making the change process happen gradually through the change leaders selected by the leadership group of the

organization. Employees need to be communicated with on an individual basis and make them realize the importance of adopting the change or having a hybrid work structure (Brandon-Jones and Kauppi, 2018). Many employees might not continue working if the office opens permanently and it will affect revenue generation. This will make the entire operation of the company difficult to be executed and hence, there is a need for cooperation from every employee. The senior employees need to be encouraged to show their experience and help the younger ones so that knowledge sharing is done. In turn, they get to know about the latest technologies.

Impact of labour market & product market pressures

There is an impact of labour market and product market pressure on how an organization shapes up as well as maintains relations with employees. At times, it has been observed that there is a demand for labour, and labour shortage leads to the hiring of people from foreign nations or from regions that have people with the right skill set. It leads business organizations to make decisions of paying the employees hired from foreign nations in the currency value that their country of origin has (Fudge, 2017). It might equate to more than the employees receive in the country where the company is located and lead to internal conflicts. There can be strikes and also deterioration of quality of work done by employees receiving less salary for doing the same job. Organizations need to abide by standard wage regulations and need to convince employees to get less salary that is due to differences in currency valuation (Greer and Doellgast, 2017). They might be junior in terms of experience to some of the employees; however, as the former one new certain skill sets, they are given higher annual package. It leads to tension and internal conflicts among the team (Greer and Doellgast, 2017). In such a case, there is a need of making sure that the job role is designed so that the recruits work as team members of the senior employees and the latter group will be leading the former one. It will give a sense of hierarchy and also leads to a collaborative environment of learning for smooth work -process.

Impact of Political developments

Political developments such as Brexit have led UK companies not to hire people from the EU and also there are difficulties in having the proper documents for working in the former country. Expatriates working in the EU and from the UK have also faced issues as a result of Brexit (Ridgway, 2019). As per reports, it has been identified that by 2022, there are almost 460,000 EU-origin workers shortage in the UK, and has been compensated by an increase in 130,000 non-EU workers. This might lead to an increase in political tension between companies. Organizations need to provide support to the employees and help them in having the paperwork done so that they can continue working (Ridgway, 2019).

AC 2.4 Analysis of Changing Nature of Work

Since the 1970s, manufacturing's once-dominant position in the labour market has been progressively diminishing in many developed nations. While manufacturing jobs have stayed constant everywhere in the globe, they have grown significantly in China. There has hardly been any progress in informality in developing countries (Allan et al., 2019). Even in non-agricultural sectors, at least 80% of employees in Bolivia, India,

Indonesia, and Tanzania are either undocumented or employed by tiny, private, unincorporated businesses. As a result, especially in low and middle-income nations, the basic characteristics of occupations have remained fairly consistent across time. Things are also shifting in other ways, and very quickly in the case of developed countries (Morgan et al. 2019). Advanced technical capabilities are in high demand in the labour market. In advanced economies, employment agreements of indefinite duration are on the decline.
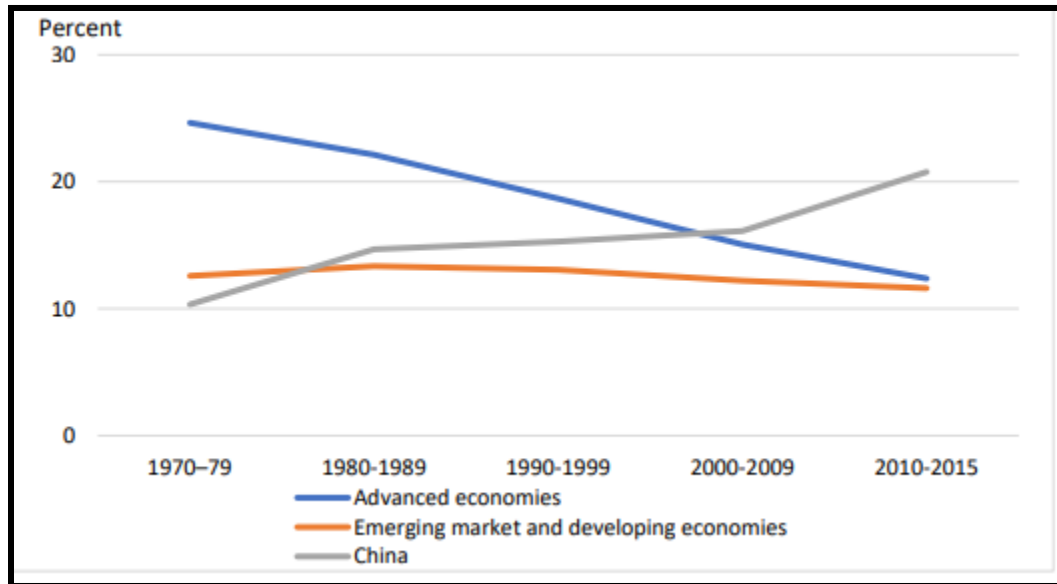
Figure 1: Impact of changing nature of work

(Source: researchgate.net, 2018)

The percentage of workers in jobs requiring only routine skills has dropped even more, from 50% in poor nations to 44% in industrialized economies (Aruldosset al. 2021). Teamwork, relationship management, people management, and caregiving are all examples of tasks that rely on individuals' ability to respond to one another based on their tacit understanding of the situation (Fraser et al., 2021).

There has also been a change in the working nature of organizations in terms of appointing employees as some of them are hired on zero-hour contract. It has led to appointing employees as per necessity and workload. It might lead to differences in the way the zero-hour contract employees get treated in comparison to those who are appointed permanently or working in the hierarchy (Ravalieret al., 2017). There might be less importance given to the voice of employees working temporarily and also in times of emergencies or market downturn, their positions will be laid down first. It might lead to issues while working with full-time employees who are getting rewards and recognition more for the same job done as compared with zero-hour contract employees (Ginès Fabrellas, 2019). It leads to a rise in internal conflicts and tension in the workplace. The temporary employees might also not be able to work on an autonomous basis or take independent decisions as the employees in the hierarchy are monitoring their activities constantly. In certain instances, they are not considered to be made permanent or important tasks might not be bestowed on them or made a part of training sessions as they are not working full-time with the organization.

Section 2

AC 3.1 Evidence of external sources of advice that contribute to people management decisions, and forms of voice are appropriate for different types of organizations

In the UK, there is an advantage that can be taken by employees for improving their position within the organization and making an employer give them importance. Employees possess statutory rights to request information and consultation arrangements in the workplace through selected representatives of CIPD. There take place dialogues between management and the workforce through the help of elected representatives (Cipd.co.uk, 2022). It makes the voice of employees to be listened to by employers in organizations where there are communication issues. At times, within an organization that has a strict hierarchy, the voice of employees is not listened to or gets lost and deformed by the time it reaches the leadership group or HR (Cipd.co.uk, 2022). In such a situation, external sources such as CIPD, TUC, and Engage for Success helps employees to put forward their voice to employers. On another hand, there might be employees whose voices are listened to by the employer through feedback taken regularly. However, the employer group might not take immediate action and are also not legally bound to make changes in current practice unless the official request is received from the workforce (Cipd.co.uk, 2022). Employers get the advantage of knowing the issues faced by employees and take a proactive approach from the CIPD guide as well as get ideas from supporting resources.

Employee voice is defined as the way people communicate their perception, and thought process to their employer and also influence matters that are affecting them most. Employers need to listen to employee voices for having an inclusive working environment and CIPD helps both employers as well as employees by acting as a mediating body. There has been a decline in trade union representation since the 1980s and collective voice is seen to influence employee engagement. At times, some organizations with work-from-home facilities need to listen to employees for input in ways in which flexibility can be ensured in that mode of the working process. There are also ways of speaking up for employees such as through whistleblowing and the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1988 protects the employees who blow the whistle. Whistleblowing happens in organizations in which there is a need of disclosing facts that might put the company in danger of becoming bankrupt and also the illegality might be affecting others. However, the limitation is that the dialogues proposed and made are not legally binding on the employers, and actions to change the pain points of employees might get delayed.

AC 3.3 Informal and direct voice to improve levels of organizational performance and employee outcomes

The phrase **"employee voice"** is used to describe the process through which employees make their thoughts known to their employers and attempt to affect workplace problems that directly affect them. Companies that use their voices effectively build trust with their staff, which leads to higher levels of innovation, profitability, and overall organizational growth.
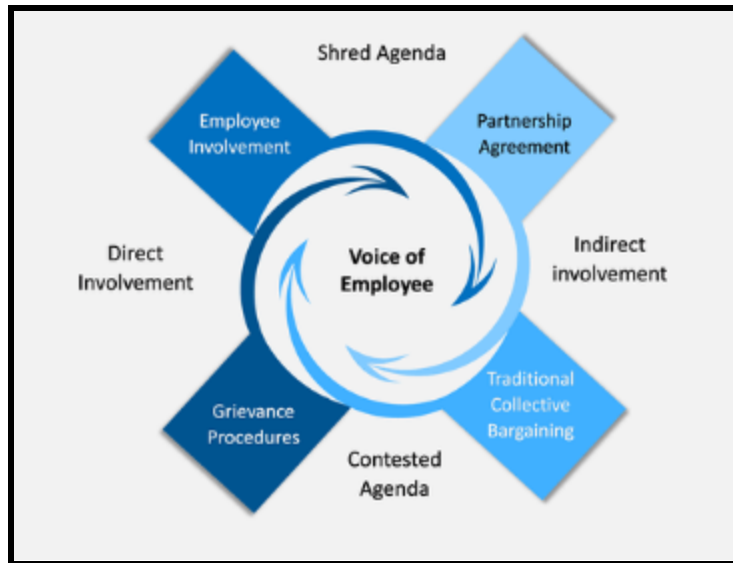
Figure 2: Employee Voice Framework

(Source: mdpi.net, 2021)

The capacity of workers to submit feedback and address problems daily is an example of what is meant by the term **"informal employee voice"**. Direct employee voice refers to the practice of employees sharing their opinions and suggestions with upper-level management (Della Torre et al., 2021). In this case, two types of direct and informal approaches to employee voice are going to be discussed further:

➢ **Joint Consultation:** Managers and worker representatives may engage in joint consultation by meeting regularly to discuss issues of mutual concern that are beyond the scope of collective bargaining. Successful joint consultation requires articulating and agreeing upon its goals in advance (Doellgast and Benassi, 2020). These should be about quantifiable and meaningful aspects of the job itself, the management process, or the creation of policies that directly impact workers (Dugganet al., 2020). During my working years in "**Chalhoub Group"**, I once experienced the employees coming together against the management due to the superiors' negligence towards proper employee recognition. But the collaborative employee voice worked, and the company came up with the innovative idea of a dashboard flashing the employee's accomplishments and also providing the employees with their deserved incentives. However, the drawback of such a process is that at times, in joint consultation, the interest level of all employees does not meet. This leads to issues between team members and might not involve cent per cent effort from all the employees in presenting their voices (De Stefano and Taes, 2022). At times, common goals are not met and this leads to the dissolving of the joint consultation.

➢ **Feedback meetings:** A meeting can be arranged for the employees where they can collectively yet individually present their opinions on different aspects of the organization. This can help the employees to open up and which can help the upper management to understand the factors which can help in employee retention. This is an informal method of listening to employee voice in which the staffs or workforce present

their opinions to the hierarchy or team leader. It leads to the taking of actions by the leadership group so that 50:50 scenarios are maintained. This leads to employee satisfaction as some of the demands are met. However, conflict might occur between employee groups if the change brought in benefits specifically certain employees and others are not agreeing with it (Fay and Ghadimi, 2020). For example, there can be feedback on changing the working hours or incorporating technology to remove the monotonous jobs that are performed them. However, some other employees might want to do autonomous jobs as it saves them from doing more productive work, however, still get the same organizational benefits as well as compensation. Therefore, the HR team needs to take measures that benefit the overall organization rather than fulfilling the personal objectives of staff.

Section 3

AC 4.1 Role of Collective Bargaining in determining pay and other contractual issues in Organizations

According to the bargaining theory of wages, the relative bargaining power of the parties to an agreement is what determines the pay, hours, and working conditions that are agreed upon by those parties (De Stefano et al., 2022). Doellgastet al.(2020) mentioned that employers had stronger negotiating power than employees, thus referring to the existence of such a theory. This is because employers can outsource the job to another employee group located in a region that has a low standard wage. It will help in cost-cutting and the employer can argue that they do not have enough financial capacity to pay a certain amount of compensation or hike to employees (Garnero, 2021. In emergencies also, the highest-paid employees have been observed to be losing their jobs if that same work can be done by junior employees after some days of training. This makes the bargaining power of employers more in comparison to employees. On other hand, the employees also possess certain power as they can go on strike and make sure that the work is not done, thereby affecting the productivity of the organization (Rawashdeh and Tamimi, 2020). At times, in countries with labour shortages, the organization is made to listen to the demand as employees leaving will impact the business financially. In other instances, the employer group set up manufacturing or operational units in countries with less wage rates.

Employers in Saudi Arabia are required by law to recognize some trade unions to participate in collective bargaining for wages and working conditions. Trade unions that are officially recognized are accorded specific rights and privileges. These rights and privileges include the ability to enter workplace premises and the right to bargain on their members' behalf. Collective bargaining can encompass a wide variety of topics, such as compensation, hours worked, holiday and sick pay rights, sick pay arrangements, and pension plans. There is a case study in Georgia where the minibus drivers engaged in collective bargaining after the Tbilisi municipality issued a tender for the routes. It triggered collective bargaining and also the formation of a local trade union of minibus drivers under the MTMWETU Umbrella (Wiego.org, 2015). The workers approached MTMWETU as they fear of losing their jobs. Union activists from the municipal bus company who were also standard employees helped in organizing the minibus drivers and were encouraged to go on strikes. This led Mayor to

organize a negotiation meeting in which there is a calling of the leader of MTMWETU and an ad hoc committee of all drivers. After a series of collective negotiations, all the demands of drivers are met which involved the retention of jobs as well as medical insurance, fixed working hours and paid annual leave. It is concluded with a collective agreement and hence, collective bargaining helps in the demand fulfilment of the workers (Wiego.org, 2015). There are various other alternatives to the collective bargaining approach such as making ESOP or Employee Stock Ownership plans so that the employees also form part of the organization. There are also Broad-Based Employee Stock Option Plans (BBESOPs) so that the wealth gap can be minimized (Wiego.org, 2015). It has helped the employees to have a more secure retirement and cash pay-outs when the company is doing well. Co-Ops are also formed and they are the purest form of democracy within an organization. It helps in the representation of employee voice and organizational programs become more effective.

AC 4.2 Impact of negotiations between employers and employee associations

Richards (2022) asserted that the impact of negotiations between employers and employees have both positive and negative impacts. The impact depends on the situation in which the negotiations take place, and thus the professional needs to be adaptive to handle the situation carefully. There are stages through which a negotiation progresses which involves preparing deals and demands that the party wants to have from the negotiation. This is followed by exchanging ideas and demands. If the ideas and demands are not fulfilled, there is a need of having a bargaining program. After that, there is concluding and making final execution of the demands. Through arbitration, the parties at disputes are made to resolve through the help of legal entities (Richards, 2022). For example, if the employees were not given the required wage or standard salary, then legal entities can help employees bargaining get the salary demanded. Through mediation, there is a middle path selected and both parties are made to agree upon the points so that a win-win scenario is restored.

In 2020, an incident happened in Chalhoub Group when some of the female employees complained about unequal treatment in terms of salary with their male counterparts. Their dedication was decreasing, and the employee turnover for females was increasing. The company was starting to lose some of the best employees to their rivals. I assessed the situation thoroughly and inferred that to maintain good work culture and retain the best employees, I needed to improve the salary structure and remove the bias that was prevalent within the form, so I modified the salary structure and offered more salary to attract new talents. Therefore, we negotiated, and the result was good. The female employee retention rate was improved by almost 24 %, and the attraction of new talents was achieved. The engagement of the female employees was enhanced, and as a result, productivity was also improved. The result was suitable for both the employees and the organization, and the application of proper analytical skills helped me to perform the job with accuracy.

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