

Employee Counseling: Bangladesh Perspective

Dr Praveen Ahmed¹

ABSTRACT

To maintain a reasonable emotional balance and channel employees emotions along constructive lines so that employee will work together effectively, counseling is a useful tool to help accomplish this goal. But counseling is more or less absent in Public Organizations of Bangladesh. This study identifies the problems due to absence of counseling and recommends the possible solutions so that the effective counseling program can be introduced in the public organizations of Bangladesh.

Key words: Counseling, Emotion, Stress, Organizational performance.

INTRODUCTION

Emotions are a normal part of life, but they can get out of control and cause employees to do things that are harmful to their own best interests and to those of the organization. Sometimes employees may leave the organization because of a trifling conflict that seems large to them, or they may undermine morale in their departments. Managers want their employees to maintain a reasonable emotional balance and channel their emotions along constructive lines so that everyone will work together effectively. Counseling is a useful tool to help accomplish this goal.

OBJECTIVES

The field of the study is public organizations of Bangladesh. Objective of the study is to identify the problems due to absence of counseling and to recommend the possible solutions so that the effective counseling program can be introduced in the public organizations of Bngladesh.

LITERATURE REVIEW

(David and Stephen 2005) Counseling is the discussion of a problem with an employee, with the general objective of helping the worker cope with it.

The purpose of counseling is to help employees either resolve or cope with the situation so that they can become more effective persons. (Price 2007) The basic theory supporting counseling is that stress and personal problems are likely to affect both

¹ Director – Training (Additional Charge), Bangladesh Institute of Management

performance and an employee's general life adjustment; therefore, it is in the best interests of all those concerned (employer, employee, and community) to help the employee, return to full effectiveness.

Counseling Programs:

Counseling programs usually are administered by the human resource department, which uses various combinations of in-house and external counseling services.

(Ivancevich 2004) Large organization often employ their own Counseling staff. Some are full time counselors, while others may be part-time counselors in the community who are available on the organization premises for certain hours during the week. Other organizations refer most problems to community agencies, even though there may be an in-house counselor who coordinates the program. If the employer is located in a large city, expert community counseling services usually are available, so both large and small organizations tend to use them. (Dessler and Varkkers 2009) Community services are especially useful to smaller organization that would be unable to employ a full time counselor.

Characteristics of Counseling:

- ❖ Requires two people, a counselor and a counselee.
- ❖ Is an act of communication.
- ❖ Helps employees cope.
- ❖ Reduces employee problems and emotional upsets.
- ❖ Improves organizational performance.
- ❖ Helps organization be more human and considerate.
- ❖ Performed by both professionals and nonprofessionals.
- ❖ Involves both job and personal problems.
- ❖ Is confidential and private.

Counseling Functions

Counseling functions are the activities performed by counseling, such as:

- ❖ **Advice.** Counselors often give advice to counsees in order to guide them toward desired courses of action.
- ❖ **Reassurance:** The counseling experience often provides employees with reassurance, which is confidence that they are following a suitable course of action and have the courage to carry it out.
- ❖ **Communication:** Counseling is a communication experience. It initiates up ward communication to management and also gives the counselor an opportunity to interpret management problems and give work insights to employees.

- ❖ **Release of emotional tension:** People tend to get emotional release from their tensions when they have an opportunity to discuss their problems with some one else.
- ❖ **Clarified thinking:** Serious discussion of problems with someone else helps to a person think more clearly.
- ❖ **Reorientation:** Reorientation involves a change in an employee's basic self through a change in goals and values. Professional counseling by psychologists and psychiatrists often helps employees reorient their values. For example, a better self-image helps a person to be more effective. It is said, Self-image "The person you see in yourself is the person you will be."

Types of Counseling

(Noe, Hollenbeck, Gerhart and wright 2004) There are three types of counseling. Namely -

- Directive counseling
- Nondirective counseling
- Participative counseling

Directive counseling:

Directive counseling is the process of listening to an employee's problems, deciding with the employee what should be done, and then telling and motivating the employee to do it. Directive counseling mostly accomplishes the counseling function of advice.

Nondirective counseling:

Nondirective, or client-centered, counseling is at the opposite end of the continuum. It is the process of skillfully listening and encouraging a counselee to explain bothersome problems, understand them, and determine appropriate solutions. It focuses on the counselee rather than on the counselor as judge and adviser; hence it is "client-centered." Some variation of such counseling usually is practiced by professional counselors.

Professional counselors often accomplish four of the six counseling functions. Communication occurs both upward and downward through the counselor. Emotional release takes place, even more effectively than with directive counseling, and clarified thinking tends to follow. The unique advantage of nondirective counseling is its ability to encourage the employee's reorientation. It emphasizes changing the person, instead of

dealing only with the immediate problem in the usual manner of directive counseling. Here is the way nondirective counseling typically works.

Participative counseling

Nondirective counseling by employers is limited because it requires professional counselors and is costly. Directive counseling often is not accepted by modern, independent employees. This means that the type of counseling used by many supervisors and personnel department employees is between the two extremes of directive and nondirective counseling. This middle ground is called participative (or cooperative) counseling because the counselor and the counselee participate in discussing a problem and developing a possible solution. Participative counseling is a mutual counselor-employee relationship that establishes a cooperative exchange of ideas to help solve an employee's problems. It is neither wholly counselor-centered nor wholly counselee-centered. Rather, the counselor and counselee use mutual discussion to apply their different knowledge, perspectives, and values to problems. Participative counseling integrates the ideas of both participants in the counseling relationship. It is, therefore, a balanced compromise that combines many advantages of both directive and nondirective counseling while throwing off most of their disadvantages. It also is best fitted to the skills of most company people who counsel employees.

Participative counseling starts by using the listening techniques of nondirective counseling; but as the interview progresses, participative counselors may play a more active role than a nondirective counselor does. They may offer bits of information and insight. They may discuss the situation from their broader knowledge of the organization, thus giving an employee a different view of the problem. In general, participative counselors apply the four counseling functions of reassurance, communication, emotional release, and clarified thinking.

METHODOLOGY

At the beginning of the study a literature review has been done. Focusing on the main objective a survey has been carried out. Total sample number was 100. Officers are included in the sample of this study. In the research both primary and secondary data were used. This survey includes the issues concerning, what are the personnel policies? How the counseling program is working? What type of counseling are there? To collect sample, officers at various levels were given a structured questionnaire. There are 20 questions in the questionnaire. 1-8 are related to personal information of the respondents. From No.9-20 are counseling related questions. Among the sample 30 candidates are interviewed. This study also included discussion with persons who are

already working or interested to work in the organization to understand the factual situation of the counseling. As a result possible in-depth analysis of the issue has been revealed in this study. It is notable that in some cases respondents did not provide any required documents.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATION

Human Resource (HR) department is responsible for counseling. But unfortunately there is no existence of HR department in most of the public organizations in Bangladesh. Although Administration or personnel division of public organizations carry out the personnel functions but they never address counseling. Moreover there are no counseling services in the community. As a result, counseling is virtually absent in the public organizations in Bangladesh. In some cases the issue addressed by the supervisors in the form of advise, which is not always acceptable to the employees and not effective as well. Therefore, all public organizations should have HR department where there should be a formal counseling program. In the larger organizations it is worthy to appoint full time counselors. Considering the expenditure the smaller and other organization may higher or engage this counselor on part time basis.

Counseling is an act of communication. But there is no open door to ventilate problem to the higher authority. In one hand there is no counseling program in the organization, on the other hand employee cannot open up with their problems. Therefore, the problems become cumulative and complex. So there should be open door policy in the organization.

At the entry level usually employee avail the lower grade salary. Naturally his/her initial salary comparably seems poor. While he or she came to know about the others salary of different levels, subsequently employee gets depressed. This deportation gradually make the employee demotivated. Although the circumstance are not unjustified but psychological factors are to be acknowledged by the supervisors. In this particular issue it will be worthy to explain the employee about the similar entry level status of salary of the seniors at the time of their entry. Once this will proactively discussed and explained to the employee this will help the employee to understand the reality. Thus employee will have a feeling of relive and subsequently he will also look for the future prospect regarding his salary and other benefits. In this way the entry level employee can be motivated and their depression would be overcome.

In case of female employee another issue of stress and demotivation is associated with pregnancy, post pregnancy period and taking care of child. Although now a days there is

a acceptable provision of maternity leave but socio economic structure of the county is not suitable enough to manage child care in family and in office. For example a good many mother do not get any support in the family to take care of her child while she is engaged in a job. At the same time there is hardly any standard child care centers available in the Community to cope with the situation. Similarly most of the working places do not have any day care provision. All together this remain a stressing issue for a working mother. Naturally she cannot concentrate both to her family and work. This imbalance makes her demotivated, frustrated. This situation lead to abstinence and ultimately employee leave the job. As because the significant portion of our population-female, in true sense, they cannot participate in the development process. Some child care center in the Community as well as working place, necessary financial support for the child take care period and suitable working schedule (flexi hour) etc. should be ensured. Positive psychological and social support from the colleagues and supervisors would be helpful and productive for the women employee.

If any chronic problem persist with the employee that leads the employee gradually to be frustrated, in many cases employee become even educated. As a consequence employee become apthetic to his job, organization and prepares to leave the organization. For example this frequently happens when an employee is debarred from his deserving promotion. To prevent such situation employee should be provided their dues of any kind. If any justified delay or any injustice to meet the employees due in both the cases he or she must be transparently explained the situation and should be counseled properly.

In case of training, many candidates are apthetic to take part in the training programme. Even they do not have any drive to apply acquired knowledge in their job. They also take the training program only as a part of their job responsibility. As a result, once the training program is finished they do not even think of its impact. These are the psychological barriers of employee and failure of the supervisors to make the training programs primitive. So the employees perception regarding training become repulsive than to attractive. Training programme should be applied; understandable contemporary, circumstance oriented, and employee would have to be counseled about the benefit and impact of training in his or her personal life and in organization.

Performance appraisals in our country often lead to demotivated for the deserving candidates as well as the undeserving candidates because of lack of practice of justified process. Very frequently nepotism, favoritism and influence become the determining factors of employee appraisal. To overcome the mentioned problem there is ample scope to practice counseling by the supervisors. To prevent irregularities for the appraisal, supervisors should have honesty, justice and high moral.

Employees who are going to retire they should also be under counseling, but in our country there is no such practice. During retirement the employee becomes vulnerable psychologically and physically. They have some feeling of insecurity and subconsciously stress is built within them. Therefore, they should be counseled that their retirement is nothing but a natural phase of service life and beyond employees existing job he or she is potential to do many other things after retirement. This will bring a positive attitude in employees mind and definitely it will help him or her to maintain a better life.

Some employees in the organization remain as a problem child. Even after giving them punishment they usually do not change their attitude towards the norms values and culture. In these cases counseling will be much more effective than other methods.

Conventionally counseling is a matter of privacy. But in practice this privacy is hardly maintained. In case of unhealthy relation between counselor and counselee and if there is any competition between them then, the counselor discloses and exploits the privacy of the counselee. As a result, employees lose their trust on counseling. So counselor should be trust worthy, he/she should maintain privacy at any cost.

CONCLUSION

Counseling helps organizations to be more human and considerate. As because counseling deals with employee problems, so employee become more cooperative, worries less about personal problems, or makes progress in other ways. It is expected that if the above mentioned problems are addressed then the public organizations of Bangladesh will attain necessary counseling programs which will benefit employees for enhancing organizational performance.

REFERENCE

Deconzo, A David and Robbins P Stephen (2005), *Fundamentals of Human Resource Management*, John Wiley and Sons (ASIA) pte. Ltd., Singapore

Dessler Gary and Varkkers Biju (2009), *Fundamentals of Human Resource Management Content, Competencies, and Applications*, Dorling Kindersley Pvt. Ltd., India.

Ivancevich, M John (2004), *Human Resource Management*, McGraw-Hill Companies, New York

Noe, A Roymond, Hollen beck RJohn, Gerhart Barry and wright M Patrick (2004), *Fundamentals of Human Resource Management*, The McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc. New York

Price Alan (2007), *Human Resource Management in a Business context*, cengage learning India Private Limited, New Delhi