

A problem of Organizational Culture or Indiscipline?

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CASE SUMMARY: *Radha has been working as a faculty with the Bandana group of institutions for four years now. The culture of the organization is a typical sethjhione with a climate of distrust prevailing in the organization. Being a family run business with three Brothers managing the show the members have adopted to develop a work culture wherein work and trust are placed on employees based on their strong likes and dislikes. The group had its own share of problems when it came to defining roles at the very top, and the attempts to cross over territories of power by the members time and again led to trouble in the business.*

This case is about Radha who in the process of delivering her best while adjusting to the culture and climate prevailing in the organisations pills out a behavior which amounts to an indiscipline and in the process loses her job.

The issue in the case is whether the behaviour of Radha was an outcome of the work culture of the organization or employee indiscipline?

I. COMPANY PROFILE

Bandana Group of institutions had now grown into a successful business empire over a period of ten years. Started in the early 2002 by a family of three brothers as a small institution offering graduation courses for Girls, the Bandana Group has now registered under the society Act and has now expanded into many post graduate and graduate programmes. The Group also offers technical and professional programmes including Engineering MBA and MCA in addition to other graduation and post graduate programmes for girls.

Being a family Run Business there were decisions and strategies taken over a cup of tea or dinner. The eldest brother Mr. Kartawho was a CA took care of the finances in the capacity of chairman while the other two brothers Mr. Raja and Mr. Ananth were designated as the Director Academics and Director R&D in the Institution. Mr. Ananth and his wife were not involved in the day to day functioning of the Institution as they both were employed with the University of Chicago. MsBharti wife of the chairman was designated as the supervisor while MsRajni wife of Mr. Raja served as the administrator in the institution. Both the female members involved themselves actively in the day to day working of the institution.

II. ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

Achieving full scale professionalisation is not always easy. Like any other family run business the group had its own share of problems when it came to defining roles at the very top, and the attempts to cross over territories of power by the members very often led to trouble in the business. Though there were attempts to define the roles and responsibilities of each of them at the very top, there would be interference or clash of directions time and again.

The lack of coordination of directions amongst the top management and contradictions of commands and opinions, personal likes and dislikes had resulted in employees experiencing high level of stress leading to role ambiguity, high workload, tight deadlines, high targets, lack of job satisfaction, long working hours and high pressure to perform.

Interpersonal conflicts at the workplace, such as boss-subordinate relationships and relationships with peers, were also a source of stress. The dysfunctional aspects of stress were directly impacting the organization's performance and also affecting the well-being of its employees. The employees were generally dissatisfied and each of the family members had developed his own set of favorable and unfavorable employees. A climate of distrust prevailed in the organization as employees tend to believe that everything would be informed to the top management in a twisted manner back firing on them and hence were on guard all the time.

With the dominance of one or a small number of individuals in the institution getting into good books of any of the directors or any of the family members, the organization had eventually evolved into a power-driven culture with people close to the members of the family being considered powerful. Moreover with the residence of the family being within the campus the female members of the family would sit at home and keep watching the employees on the CCTV cameras all the time leaving no freedom to any of the employees to do their work effectively as the question as to what were you doing there or why did so and so meet you for a long time was a frequent one. This power-centric culture had made employees more of amateurs leading to an unprofessional high stress work environment where they would keep on backbiting one another to get into the good books of any of the family member.

III. BACKGROUND

Ms Radha has been working as the HOD in the department of management for four years now. She had joined as a faculty and was promoted as the HOD after a year of her service. Mr. Sharad who was the right hand of Ms Bharti had his candidature for the post of HOD in commerce department but looking into Radha's performance she was given the additional responsibility of taking care of both the commerce and management department. She was good at her work and kept herself occupied to her set of responsibilities. She would hardly involve herself in any loose talks with her colleagues or any family member including top management. Her duties and responsibilities included taking care of discipline of students, proper conduct of classes, ensuring timely completion of syllabus, organizing additional activities for the overall development of students. She reported to the Dean who was not a member of the family himself as well to the Director (Academics) for other administrative work and at times to the Chairman for financial decisions. She worked hard and efficiently and ensured good results and placements of the students. At times there would be clashes between the interest of the management and the dean, wherein the management would insist on more number of curricular activities for publicity in the media while dean would insist on not interrupting the regular classes. Radha would efficiently balance the two activities working towards academics and overall improvement of the students.

In spite of her hard work and focus Radha realized that with time things did not look very encouraging for her. Eventually she recognized that the Director (Academics) would find ways to humiliate her in front of everyone for reasons beyond her understanding, she would be blamed for no reason and would be called by Bharti to be disgraced off and on. Humiliation was possibly the desired style of management of all the family members as those employees who were not in the good books of management would be insulted as probably that was the approach of getting work done. Ms Radha realized that matters were getting bad to worst and probably she would have to look out for a job elsewhere soon. This was further endorsed when one day she was asked to take care of only the management department and Sharad was made the HOD for commerce department. Little did she realize that Sharad had been poisoning the management against her as he was believed to be one of the informers of Bharti.

Things got worsened on a day before the seminar that had to be organized by Ms Sakshi a part time faculty who had five classes back to back and was also the teacher on duty for the seminar to be held next day. Ms Sakshi had joined part time on account of her family problem and generally would not stay back beyond the working hours which she had made it very clear at her time of appointment. The management had an approach of giving classes to the part timers back to back. Since Sakshi was the teacher on duty for the seminar next day Radha scheduled classes of another faculty so that Sakshi could get a period free to coordinate for the seminar. Bharti got upset and humiliated Radha over the phone and said that it was not required to give a free period to Sakshi as she should have stayed back to complete her work. She also mentioned that Sakshi had stayed back until 6.30 on a picnic with students the other day, if Sakshi can stay back for enjoying with the students she should have very well stayed back to complete her work too. Radha knew Sakshi's problem and Sakshi had also mentioned to Radha that since she was put as the teacher on duty for the picnic there was no point in requesting the management to relieve her from the picnic duty as she would be subject to humiliation as that has been the precedence. Ms Radha was confused and was wondering if Sakshi had taken a wrong decision by staying beyond her work timings as now the management would make sure that she stayed back after her work timings occasionally.

The work was getting hectic with Sunday being declared working for the Parent Teachers Meeting and Radha had to coordinate the whole show. It was a hectic day and the employees in general were aggrieved as they were called on a Sunday while the same work could be carried on the next working day. But then it has been a precedence that the management always would cut down on holidays and declare many Sundays as working to compensate against the holidays granted against a festival or on account of a national holiday.

Sakshi was put on duty again and she was upset about it and confided in Radha that it was getting difficult for her to manage. After the meeting with the parents were over Radha was sitting with sakshi and two of her colleagues in the staff room when the casual talk as to how difficult it had become to work was on with each of them venting out her share of problems and difficulties. Meanwhile Sakshi told Radha that she should be talking to the management as the matters were getting bad to worst for her with each passing day. Radha said that there was no point talking to the management as their approach towards the employees was very unprofessional. To endorse her point further she put on the speaker the conversation she had over phone with Bharti the other day.

Ms Radha had a call recorder app in a mobile wherein all the incoming and outgoing calls were recorded. Though Radha never made use of this application she put on the speaker the conversation just to reiterate further the approach of management.

The information that Radha had put on speaker the conversation with Bharti reached the management and the next day Radha was called by Bharti in her room. Bharti asked for Radha's mobile which Radha very obediently handed over to Bharti. Bharti though not comfortable with the smart phones tried to decipher as to what Radha had recorded on her mobile. She accused Radha of having broken the trust of the management and having recorded her conversation and accused her of having maintained many confidential information of the management on her mobile. Radha kept explaining that she had not recorded her voice on voice recorder but this was a feature of the call recorder App that had been downloaded on her mobile and that she had no intentions of keeping them. Things seemed to go out of control for Radha as she kept explaining that she had no intentions of cheating the management.

The next day Radha was called into the room of the chairman who asked her to clear her dues and take her relieving letter from the HR Office. Radha kept pleading but the chairman didn't budge.

ISSUES

Is the institution responsible for Radha's behaviour? Is it not a loss to lose an efficient employee? Was the management's decision to terminate Radha a right one? There are many issues that come up from an HR perspective. What according to you went wrong from the management perspective and from an employee perspective?