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Grievance Handling Mechanism at Indian Oil Corporation: A Case Study of Mathura Refinerey

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ABSTRACT: Human beings as resources are the most valuable assets of any organizations and account for the biggest reason for the success of failure of the organization. If these resources are acquired and managed properly an organization survives all the tests of time and competition. In fact the usage of other physical, material and financial resources depends upon the quality of human resources of the organization. A satisfied work force make the best use of all other resources of the organization to bring out the best results. Public Sector Enterprises being a 'model employer' have to maintain a high level of satisfaction among its officers and employees. This needs proper channels through which various issues and grievances related to them are routed to the top level management, where it could be resolved and feedback given to the employees. Grievance may be any genuine or imaging feeling of dissatisfaction or injustice which an employee experience about his job and it's nature, about the management policies and procedures. It must be expressed by the employee and brought to the notice of the management and the organization. Grievances take the form of collective disputes when they are not resolved. Also they will then lower the morale and efficiency of the employees. Unattended grievances result in frustration, dissatisfaction, lower productivity, lack of interest in work, absenteeism etc

This paper is based on the study of the grievance handling mechanism which is being followed by the Mathura Refinery of Indian Oil Corporation. For achieving this objective, officers and non-officers respondents and their responses are used with structured questionnaire and then analyzed through statistical techniques.

Keywords: Model Employer, Grievance Handling Mechanism, Irrational Management Policies.

1. Introduction

Public Sector Enterprises being a 'model employer' have to maintain a high level of satisfaction among its officers and employees. This needs proper channels through which various issues and grievances related to them are routed to the top level management, where it could be resolved and feedback given to the employees. Grievance may be any genuine or imaging feeling of dissatisfaction or injustice which an employee experience about his job and it's nature, about the management policies and procedures. It must be expressed by the employee and brought to the notice of the management and the organization. Grievances take the form of collective disputes when they are not resolved. Also they will then lower the morale and efficiency of the employees. Unattended grievances result in frustration, dissatisfaction, lower productivity, lack of interest in work, absenteeism etc.

The formal mechanism for dealing with such worker's dissatisfaction is called grievance procedure. All companies whether unionized or not should have established and known grievance methods of processing

grievances. The primary value of grievance procedure is that it can assist in minimizing discontent and dissatisfaction that may have adverse effects upon co-operation and productivity. A grievance procedure is necessary in large organization which has numerous personnel and many levels with the result that the manager is unable to keep a check on each individual, or be involved in every aspect of working of the small organization.

2. Causes of Grievance

Grievance may result from the following factors:

- Improper working conditions such as strict production standards, unsafe workspace, bad relation with managers, etc.
- Irrational management policies such as overtime, transfers, inappropriate salary structure, etc.
- Violation of organizational rules and practices.

The manager should immediately identify all grievances and must take appropriate steps to eliminate the causes of such grievances so that the employees remain loyal and committed to their work. Effective grievance management is an essential part of personnel management.

3. Managing Grievances

The manager should adopt the following approach to manage grievance effectively:

- Quick Action: As soon as the grievance arises, it should be identified and resolved. Training must be given to managers to effectively and timely manage a grievance. This will lower the detrimental effects of grievance on the employees and their performance.
- Acknowledge Grievance: The manager must acknowledge the grievance put forward by the employee as
 manifestation of true and real feeling of the employees. Acknowledgement by the manager is eager to
 look into the complaint impartially and without any bias. This will create a conducive work environment
 with instances of grievance reduced.
- **Gathering Facts:** The managers should gather appropriate and sufficient facts explaining the grievance's nature. A record of such facts must be maintained so that these can be used in later stage of grievance redressal.
- **Examining the Causes of Grievance:** The actual cause of grievance should be identified. Accordingly remedial actions should be taken to prevent repetition of the grievance.
- **Decisioning:** After identifying the cause of grievance, alternative course of actions should be thought of to manage- the grievance. The effect of each course of action on the existing and future management policies and procedure should be analyzed and accordingly decision should be taken by the manager.
- **Execution and Review:** The manger should execute the decision quickly, ignoring the fact, that it may or may not hurt the employees concerned. After implementing the decision, a follow-up must be there to ensure that the grievance has been resolved completely and adequately.

Timely management of grievance ensures an amiable work environment for satisfaction of both the employees and the managers. It also helps the management to frame policies and procedures acceptable to the employees. It becomes an effective medium for the employees to express the feelings, discontent and dissatisfaction openly and formally.

4. Model Grievance Procedure

In India, the government has been making a plea for grievance machinery at the plant level ever since 1956-58 when the standing committee of the Indian Labour Conference submitted a draft on the various aspects of a grievance procedure. The code of Discipline adopted by the Conference laid down that the management and unions should establish, upon a mutually agreed basis, grievance procedure which would ensure a speedy and full investigation leading to a settlement.

The National Commission of Labour set up by the Government as a tripartite body in 1969 also spelt out the nature of grievance and model grievance procedure. However, this remains a recommendation and is not a statute yet. In effect, government machinery can only recommend but it is up to respective managements of each enterprises to formally adopt, or reject, the grievance procedure.

At present the Model Grievance Procedure in India provides for five successive time bound steps, each leading to the next in case the aggrieved employee prefers an appeal. These steps are as follows:

Procedure Time Frame Appeal to CMD One week 1 General Manager 7 days 1 **Grievance Committee** (Manger + Union Reps.) 7 days unanimous 1 HOD 3 days 1 Supervisor Shop Floor 48 hours Foreman Worker

Table 1. Model Grievance Procedure

- The aggrieved employees shall convey his or her grievance verbally to the officer designated by the management to deal with grievance. The officer will have to reply to the complaints within forty eight hours of its presentation to him or her.
- If the grievant is not satisfied with the answer or does not receive the answer within 48 hours, he or she shall, then, present the grievance to the department head nominated for this purpose. The head must give his or her reply within three days of the presentation of the grievance.
- If the aggrieved employeesis still not satisfied with the decision of the departmental head or does not receive within the stipulated period, the employee can approach to the Grievance Committee for the settlement of his or her grievance. The Grievance committee has to give its recommendations in seven days and report the same to the management. The management must communicate the decision to the grievant within 3 days.
- If still employee is not satisfied either with the decision made by the Grievance Committee or does not
 receive decision from the committee, he or she can make appeal to the management for revision of the
 decision taken. The management can take a week period for appeal to be considered and the revised
 decision to informs to the grievant.
- If the employee is still not satisfied with the management's decision, the grievance is referred to a voluntary arbitration within a week after decision taken by the management at stage 4. The decision of the arbitrator is final and binding on the parties, i.e., the management and the union.

5. Guidelines for Handling Grievances

The following guidelines may help a supervisor while dealing with grievances. He need not follow all these steps in every case- It is sufficient to keep these views in mind while handling grievances:

- Treat each case as important and get the grievance in writing.
- Talk to the employee directly. Encourage him to speak truth. Give him a patient hearing.
- Discus in a private place. Ensure confidentiality, if necessary.
- Handle each case within a time-frame.

- Examine company provisions in each case. Identify violations, if any. Do not hold back the remedy if the company is wrong. Inform your superior about all grievances.
- Get all relevant facts about the grievance. Examine the personal record of the aggrieved worker. See whether any witnesses are available. Visit the work area. The idea is to find where things have gone wrong and who is at fault.
- Gather information from the union representative, what he has to say, what he wants, etc. Give short replies, uncovering the truth as well as provisions. Treat him properly.
- Control your emotions, your remarks and behaviour.
- Maintain proper records and follow up the action taken in each case.

Smart organizations invariably go for a smart grievance redressal system. If the culture of grievance redressal is not developed, the employee becomes discontented, dissatisfied and disgruntled. That may not be visible but it does affect performance. Such hidden grievances do more harm than the manifested ones. Therefore, there must be a mechanism to identify grievance, systematically, and reduce the possibility of such grievances emerging again in future.

6. Review of Literature

The study of public sector enterprise in India has caught the attention of many scholars form the disciplines like Public Administration, Economics, and Management etc. A few of them have studied human resource development from motivation or morale aspect. Still, the one of the most vital issue in public sector of India in present scenario i.e the 'Maharatna' public sector companies is almost untouched and hardly there is any study on Human Resource Management in this important segment of Indian public sector.

V.P. Michael¹ (1997)opines that HRM is that part of management process which develops and manages the human elements of enterprise considering the resourcefulness of the organization's own people in terms of total knowledge, skills, creative abilities, talents aptitudes and potentialities for effectively actuating. He has dealt with all important function and strategies of HRM like HRP, HRD, organization development, communication systems, motivation, human relations, industrial relations, appraisal, compensation, worker's participation and involvement. Apart from this, nature, scope and challenges to HRM have been dealt with. Wendell French (1997)in his work has explored the conceptual framework, historical perspectives, processes in HRM, development of HRM as a profession, contemporary challenges to HRM, organizational considerations in HRM, motivation and management philosophy, organization culture and climate, job designing and staffing, work rules and schedules, recruitment and selection, training and development, performance appraisal, compensations and rewards, employee benefits and protections, rights, responsibility and justice, safety and health management, participation, globalization and the future of HRM. The issue of International Human Resource Management has also been dealt with.

John Storey² (1997)in his work dealt with transitions and transformations, managing change, role of top and middle management, trade unionism and industrial relations. He is of the view that a number of 'radical changes' in the methods of management and work organizations are taking place all over the world and sometimes these changes are beyond control. The role of HRM, therefore, has become very demanding and challenging according to him.

Harold Koontz and Heinz Weihrich³ (1998) gave top priority importance to human assets in any organization. They have dealt in detail with various aspects of management and human resource accounting (HRA) and audit. Further, they opine that staffing process of HRM is the important factor for success and

V.P. Michael, *HRM and Human Relations*, Himalaya Publishing House, Mumbai, 1997.

² John Storey, *Managing Human Resources- Preparing for the 21st century*, Beacon Books, New Delhi, 1997.

Harold Koontz and Heinz Weihrich, *Essentials of Management*, Tata Mc Grant Hill Publishing Company Ltd, New Delhi, 1998.

failure of any organization. The success of this process is essential with proper induction of human assets. They have also touched the vital issues like effects of environment on organizations.

N.K. Singh⁴ (1999) has made a very comprehensive study on HRM and taken up core issues like concept, standardization of jobs, manpower planning, recruitment and selection policy, performance appraisal, training and development, wage regulations and disputes, succession planning etc. He has particularly discussed the evolution of HRM in India, also taking examples from USA where much emphasis in given to HRM, he has explained various phases in management like welfare management (1920-40's), personnel management (1950-1970's), HRD concept (1970's- 1980's), HRM concept (1980 onwards). Present concept, according to him, is the 'Culture and Performance Concept' in the form of HRM. Fast changing requirement of institutions do not give HRM strategies to be 'all time valid' ones.

James A.E. Stoner, R. Edward Freeman, Daniel R. Gilbert, JR⁵ (2004) in their combined work have dealt with various aspects and dimensions of management, HRM being one of the most important one. They have explained the traditional role of HRM as a process involving HRP, recruitment, selection, socialization, training and development, performance appraisal, promotions, transfers, demotions, separations etc. They further opine that HRM has acquired new role with emergence of new trends like 4C's in the form of Competence, Commitment, Congruence, Cost effectiveness. This new model of HRM forms the basis of evaluating an organizations effectiveness and business strategies. The new HR polices, according to them are most important part of the functioning of modern organizations.

A.B. Singh and Anurag Singh⁶ **(2004)** have made a case study on Oil and natural Gas Corporation Limited (ONGC). They have studied it from the public sector reforms and have explained the concept, objectives, rational, development and efficiency of public sector in India. They have established a relationship between the fast pace development in GDP of India and growth of progressive companies like ONGC.

K.P.M. Sundhram and RuddarDutt⁷ **(2005)** have dealt with various aspects on the evolutions working and effectiveness of Indian public sector undertakings. They have tried to explain the rationale of having public sector in India and also the effects of liberalizations, privatization and globalization on it. They have given enough statistics of the working of top ten public sector undertakings which are showing huge profits and are workings as competitive global companies.

Tannuja Agarwala⁸ (2007) has made a study on Strategic HRM. She has explained the basic concept of HRM, its functions and strategies. She has analysed that how the traditional personnel management took the shape of strategic human resource management in present times. She has also dealt with issues in international HRM also.

7. Research Methodology

The following research methodology has been adopted for the study:

7.1 Objective of the Study

The objective is to review the policy for handling grievances of the employees at Mathura Refinery of Indian Oil Corporation.

7.2 Hypothesis:

• H₀: There exists no relationship between existence of grievance handling mechanism and satisfactory redressal of grievances.

⁴ N.K. Singh, *Human Resource Management*, Excell Books, New Delhi, 1999.

James A.F. Stoner, R. Edward Freeman, Daniel R. Gilber, *Jr. Management*, Pearson Education (Singapore), Indian Branch, New Delhi, 2004.

⁶ A.B. Singh, Anurag Singh, *Public Sector Reforms in India- A Case Study of ONGC*, A.P.H. Publishing Corporation, New Delhi, 2004.

⁷ K.P.M. Sundharam and RuddarDutt, *Indian Economy*, S. Chand and Co.New Delhi, 2004.

⁸ TanujaAgarwala, *Strategic HRM*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2007

 H_a: There exists a direct relationship between existence of grievance handling mechanism and satisfactory redressal of grievances.

7.3 Types and Sources of Data

The study is based on the primary data which has been collected with the help of questionnaire and personal interviews from the employees of Mathura Refinery. Also the secondary data has been collected from the Corporate Office- HR Department of IOC, New Delhi and HR Department of Mathura Refinery, Mathura.

7.4 Sampling Plan

The size of the sample has been decided on the basis of Taro Yamane's Formula i.e:

 $n=N/1+N*(e)^2$, where,

n = Sample Size

N = Population Size

e = The acceptable sampling error (0.05 at 95% confidence level)

Applying the formula, the sample size has been determined for Officers and Non-Officers to be 194 and 276 respectively. The questionnaire was distributed randomly to all of them and only 146 among Officers and 236 among Non-Officers responded. Out of them few questionnaires were rejected due to incompletion and inconsistency and finally 120 questionnaires among Officers and 223 questionnaires among Non-Officers were used.

Table 2. Sample Size for the Study

Composition	Calculated Sample Size	Responded	Used
Officers	194	146	120
Non-officers	276	236	223

7.5 Data Analysis

Data collected from the primary and secondary sources have been tabulated and arranged so that meaningful inference could be drawn. Statistical tools like t-Test and percentage have been used for analysis and interpretation. Pie-Charts have been used for presentation of data.

8. Model Grievance Procedure at Mathura Refinery

8.1 Grievance Procedure for Workmen

First Stage

The aggrieved workman shall first present his grievance verbally to his immediate supervisor. The concerned supervisor shall enquire into the matter and give his answer verbally to the aggrieved workman within a period of four workings days after consulting his respective sectional head, where necessary. The immediate supervisor will maintain a record of the grievance represented to him and the answer there too.

Second Stage

If the aggrieved workman is not satisfied with the decision of his immediate supervisor or does not receive answer to his grievance within the stipulated period of four days, he shall present his grievance in writing in the prescribed form to the head of the department (HOD) through his immediate supervisor who will send the form to the head of the HOD within two days of receiving the same after recording his own findings. HOD will examine all the facts relating to the complaint and if necessary, hold discussion with the workman, the first line supervisor and the section head and try to find out satisfactory solution of the grievance. He may seek the advice of personnel officer. He has to record his decision on a grievance form and communicate his decision in writing to the workman through the section head within a period of seven days. The grievance form thereafter shall be sent to the personnel department for record.

Third Stage

If the decision of the head of the department is not acceptable to the workman, the workman may request the HOD to forward the grievance to the secretary of the grievance committee who shall place the same before the committee at its meeting. The committee shall enquire the matter and make its recommendations to the General Manger (GM) within ten working days of the receipt of the workman's grievance.

If the recommendation cannot be made within this stipulated time, the reason of the delay should be recorded. In the event of a difference of opinion among the Members of the committee, the view of the members along with the relevant papers shall be placed before the GM for final decisions. In either case, the final decision of GM shall be communicated to the workmen concerned by the secretary of the grievance committee within one week from the receipt of the committee's recommendation.

8.2 Grievance Procedure for Officers

The procedure for dealing with the grievances of the officers of the corporation is detailed below:

8.2.1 Procedure for Handling Grievance

- An aggrieved officer shall take up his grievances orally with his immediate supervisor at the Unit. After discussing the matter orally, if he is not satisfied, the grievance shall be recorded in writing and presented to his Departmental Head through his immediate supervisor.
- If the grievance is not satisfactorily redressed, the aggrieved officer shall summit his grievance in writing, which shall be in triplicate (one copy to be sent to his Departmental Head, one copy to the Unit or Central Grievance Committee as per the jurisdiction of the case and one copy to be retained by the officer himself).
- The Departmental Head would record his comments on the copies received by him and would forward the same to the Member Secretary of the Unit or Central Grievance Committee, as the case may be.
- The Unit or Central Grievance Committee shall meet as often as required and after thorough examination of the grievance and of all relevant facts of the case would record its findings and recommendation in the case and forward the same to the Deciding Authority. If the unit or Central Grievance Committee cannot come to unanimous/majority recommendation, the grievance along with the Committee's findings shall be forwarded to the Deciding Authority for his decision.
- The Deciding Authorities shall be as follows:
 - For grievances considered by Unit Grievance Committees:
 - General Manager of the respective Region
 - General Manager of the Respective Refinery Unit
 - General Manager (Pipelines)
 - Head (R&D Centre)
 - General Manager (P&A) for the R&P Head quarters/Chairman's office Unit.
 - For grievances considered by the Central Grievance Committee :
 - -Managing Director of the respective Division.
- If the aggrieved officer, whose grievance has been considered by the Unit Grievance Committee is not satisfied with the decision of the Deciding Authority, he will have option to appeal to the Managing Director concerned, whose decision shall be final.
- The Unit or Central Grievance Committee would have the option to interview the aggrieved officer and consult his immediate Supervisor if the Committee considers it necessary.
- After the Deciding Authority has taken a decision on the case, a copy of the decision shall be sent to the
 Grievance Committee concerned for its information who in turn would suitably convey the decision to
 the aggrieved officer concerned.
- A lawful and reasonable order given by the Management shall be complied with even if an officer wishes to raise a grievance in respect of such an order. Implementation of such order cannot be kept in abeyance just because an officer has raised a grievance in this respect.

8.2.2 Grievance Committees, their Composition and Scope

The following two Committees would be formed to deal with the grievances of officers:

- Unit Grievance Committee
 - Unit Grievance Committee shall be formed as indicated below:
 - One in each Region of the Marketing Division. (Marketing Headquarters office will be covered along with the Western Region)
 - One in each refinery unit of the R&F Division.

- One for the Pipeline units of the R&P Division.
- One for the Research & Development Centre.
- One for the R&P Headquarter (This will cover the Pipelines Headquarters and Chairman's office).
- The membership of the Committee will consist of two nominees of the Unit Management and two nominees of the Unit officers' Association.
- The two nominees of the Unit Management will comprise of the Head of the Personnel Department of
 the Unit who will act as Member-Secretary and an officer of the level of Departmental Head in the Unit
 concerned.
- The scope of the Unit Grievance Committee will be to consider grievances of officers in Grade 'A' and 'B' from the unit concerned.

8.2.3 Central Grievance Committee

- Central Grievances Committees shall be formed at the Headquarter office of the Marketing Division at Bombay and the Headquarters office of the R&P Division at Delhi. The latter shall also cover officers in the R&D Centre and Chairman's office.
- The membership of this Committee shall consist of two nominees of the Headquarters Management and two nominees of the Central Executive Committee of the Officers Association.
- The two nominees of the Headquarters Management will be nominated by the Managing Director of the Division concerned. One of these nominees will act as the Member-Secretary of the Committee.
- The scope of the Central Grievance Committee will be to consider grievances of officers in salary grade 'C' and above.

8.2.4 Overall Guidelines and Conditions

- Only grievances of officers arising out of their employment in the Corporation shall be covered under the scope of the Grievance Procedure.
- The Officer shall bring up his grievance immediately, or in any case within a period of 3 months of its occurrence.

Grievances pertaining to or arising out of the following shall not come under the purview of the grievances procedure :

- i. Annual Performance Appraisals/Confidential Reports.
- ii. Promotions including DPC minutes and decisions.

Grievance pertaining to or arising out of disciplinary action or appeal against such action shall be channeled to the Competent Authority as laid down under the Conduct, Discipline and Appeal Rules of the Corporation and would not be channeled through the Grievance Committee.

9. Analysis And Findings

Complaints affecting one or more individual workman in respect of their wage payments.overtime, leave, transfer, promotion (where a person or persons possessing the qualifications prescribed by the management and adequate seniority has/have not been promoted) seniority, work assignment or working condition will constitute grievance which will come under the purview of the grievance procedure.

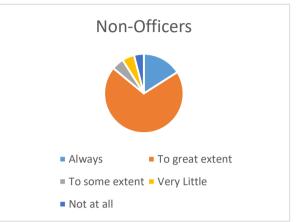
Grievance arising out of punishment, discharge or dismissal of workmen will not be subject to the procedure mentioned herein. A workman who has been punished, discharged or dismissed will have the right to appeal to authority prescribed in the certified standing order/ model standing orders as may be applicable to him.

Points of dispute, which are of a general applicability or of a considerable magnitude, will fall outside the scope of this procedure.

Table 3.Employees Opinion if the Work Rules, Policies and Procedures are Fairly and Consistently Applied to All

	SCALE					
RESPONDENTS	Always	To great	To some	Very Little	Not at all	Total
		extent	extent			
OFFICERS	20	78	12	8	2	120
NON-OFFICERS	36	156	11	11	9	223





The above table and pie-chart shows that 82% officers and 86% non-officer have agreed that either completely or to a great extent the work rules, policies and procedures are fairly and consistently applied to all.

Table 4. Employees Opinion if their Higher Authority Pay Attention in Case Grievance is Put up by Them

	SCALE						
RESPONDENTS	Always	То	great	To some	Very Little	Not at all	Total
		extent		extent			
OFFICERS	7	98		6	7	2	120
NON-OFFICERS	25	174		9	13	2	223





Fig. 2 Employees Opinion if their Grievancesis Looked Into

The above table graph depicts that 88% of officers and 89% of non-officers opined that either completely or to a great extent their higher authority pay attention in case grievance is put up by them.

Table 5.Employees Opinion towards their Awareness About Various Committees that Redress the Grievances

	SCALE					
RESPONDENTS	Completely	To great	To some	Very	Not at all	Total
		extent	extent	Little		
OFFICERS	4	96	14	5	1	120
NON-OFFICERS	27	176	13	5	2	223





Fig. 3 Employees Awareness about Various Committees that Redress the Grievances

The above table and chart depicts that 83% officers and 91% of the non-officers opined that either completely or to a great extent they are aware of the various committees that redress the grievances.

Table 6.Employees Opinion towards their Satisfaction Level with the Overall Grievance Settlement System

	SCALE						
RESPONDENTS	Highly	Satisfaction	Average	Dissatisfaction	Highly	Total	
	Satisfaction				Dissatisfaction		
OFFICERS	2	101	11	1	5	120	
NON-OFFICERS	20	187	7	4	5	223	

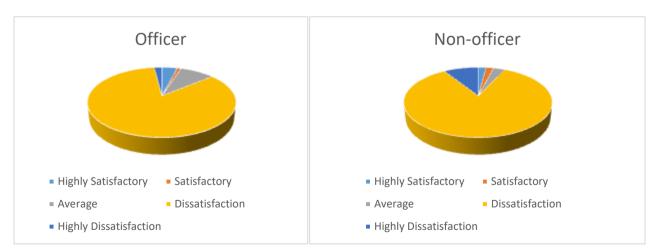


Fig. 4. Satisfaction Level with the Overall Grievance Settlement System

The above table and graph shows that the majority of officers (86%) and non-officers (93%) have opined that they are either highly satisfied or satisfied with the overall Grievance Settlement System that exist in the organization.

Table 7.t-Test for Grievance Handling Mechanism.

VARIABLE	MEAN	S.D	t	d.f.	Sig.	Decision
Grievance Settlement Mechanism	-1.11	1.33	-14.504	299	.000	Significant
						(P<0.05)

Result: As the P value is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected. Hence, there exist a direct relationship between existence of grievance handling mechanism and satisfactory redressal of grievances.

10. Findings & Conclusion

- Grievance procedure exists for both officers and non-officers in the refinery.
- 82% officers and 86% non-officer have agreed that the work rules, policies and procedures are fairly and consistently applied to all.
- 88% of officers and 89% of non-officers opined that their higher authority pay attention in case grievance is put up by them.
- 83% officers and 91% of the non-officers opined that they are aware of the various committees that redress the grievances.
- the majority of officers (86%) and non-officers (93%) have opined that they are satisfied with the overall Grievance Settlement System that exist in the organization.

To conclude we may say that the Mathura refinery provides comprehensive welfare facilities to its employees to take care of their health, efficiency, economic betterment, social status, etc., and to enable them to give their best at the workplace. Refinery is supporting a participative culture in the management of the enterprise through a consultative approach and establishing a harmonious relationship for industrial peace and higher productivity. Employees' participation is also ensured through information-sharing with the collectives and employees on a regular basis. The efforts to promote employees' participation in management through various activities such as Suggestions Scheme, Total Productive Maintenance, Quality Circles, Mentoring, etc. are being taken up.

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