# ASSESSMENT OF CONFLICT AMONG SUPERVISORS AND OPERATIONAL EMPLOYEES IN GEMINI GARMENTS LIMITED: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY

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## ABSTRACT

*Conflict tends to occur at several plateaus, between two or more individuals, groups, or even nations. Thus conflict has to be viewed from both the micro and the macro perspectives. Conflict may occur between two individuals as in the case of superior vs. subordinate, employees vs. employees, owners vs. owners, etc. Groups may be drawn into conflict with each other on the basis of salary and remuneration, benefits and reward and ethnic differences or union management rivalries. Conflict in the organization can be extremely destructive to good teamwork and organizational growth. This paper seeks to identify the nature, causes and effects of conflicts among supervisors and operational employees and how these are managed in Gemini Garments Limited (GGL) as an experimental case. Managed in the wrong way, real and legitimate differences between people can quickly spiral out of control, resulting in situations where co-operation breaks down and the team's mission is threatened. Therefore, demands that joint efforts and energies be expended to prevent or resolve conflict so as to promote co-operation, co- ordination, effectiveness and efficiency at the workplace.*

***Keywords: Conflicts, Resolution, Strategy, Management.***

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Mostly, we can say that in all human endeavors, if cooperation is one side of the coin, conflict is the other. In the words of Owens (2001), "the potential for conflict permeates the relations of humankind, and that potential is a force for health and growth as well as destruction ... no group can be harmonious ... for such group would be empty of process and structure". Conflict is thus, an important issue and normal aspect of organizational behavior as well as a legitimate part of human social systems. Organizations with no conflict no response to change. Conflict may occur between two individuals as in the case of superior vs. subordinate, husband vs. wife, house owners vs. tenant, etc. Groups may be drawn into conflict with each other on the basis of caste, community and ethnic differences or union management rivalries. Conflict can serve as a useful function by stimulating creative solutions to problems. Danso-Mensah (2003), adduces that conflict improves organizational effectiveness by stimulating change and improving the decision making process. Further, Pony (1990), claims that conflict induces greater creativity, more worker enthusiasm for better decisions. However, conflict if poorly managed can rip an organization apart by creating walls between co-workers leading to poor performance and even resignations.

### 1.1. Definition and Characteristics of Conflict

There is no consensus on a specific definition of conflict. Numerous definitions are given to the term by various writers and authorities. Conflict is natural disagreement resulting from individuals or groups that differ in attitudes, beliefs, values or needs. It can also originate from past rivalries and personality differences. On the other hand conflict is an inevitable part of human existence, either in organizational life or in one's personal life. Whenever and wherever people work collectively,

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conflict is likely to occur. However, Owens (2001) contends that two things are essential to any conflict: (i) divergent (or apparently divergent) views and (ii) incompatibility of those views. In the view of Wilson and Hanna (1990), "conflict denotes a struggle involving opposing ideas, values and limited resources". This means conflict occurs when there are divergent orientations and inadequate resource levels within a given organization. On the part of Bulin (2001), conflict donates a clash of expectations, values, ideas, or interests which is either positive or negative and unproductive.

Again, Wagner and Hollenbeck (2002) maintain that conflict is a process of opposition and confrontation that can occur in organizations between either individuals or groups. At a glance we can characterize the conflict as a process, inevitable, normal Part of Life, Perception, dimensional.

## 2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main objective of the study is to assess the conflict among supervisors and operational employees in Gemini Garments Limited (GGL).

**Specific objectives:**
- To measure the nature of conflicts among supervisors and operational employees.
- To measure the causes and effects of conflicts among supervisors and operational employees.
- To provide some recommendations how to manage conflicts among supervisors and operational employees at GGL.

## 3. METHODOLOGY

A self-developed Likert structured questionnaire was the main instrument used for collecting data for the study. Two sets of questionnaire of similar information were designed to identify the nature, causes and effects of conflicts among supervisors and operational employees and how these are managed at Gemini Garments Ltd. (GGL).

A four-point Likert rating scale was used for this research. The scale had score values for positive statements as: Strongly Agree =4, Agree = 3, Disagree =2 and Strongly Disagree = 1. The questionnaire was made up of two main parts: the first part (A) dealt with biographical data; the second part consisted of four sections namely B, C, D and E. Items on Section B examined the nature of conflicts, section C, the causes of conflicts and D, the effects of conflicts. Section E considered strategies for resolving or managing conflicts. In all, 100 people were interviewed whose 20 supervisors and 80 operational employees. Descriptive statistics was used for the analysis of the data collected. For simplification of the analysis, responses to "Strongly Agree" and "Agree" statements were put together as "Agree". Also "Disagree" and "Strongly Disagree" were combined as "Disagree"

## 4. ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

### 4.1. Demographical Data of Respondents

Table 1 shows the results for Section A of the questionnaire. It covers the gender distribution, age range, educational level, marital status and work experience.

### 4.1.1. Gender

In the supervisory level where males dominate the garments and operation level Female dominate the garments. Table 1 shows that only 15% of supervisors were female and where as 78.75 % of operational employees involved in the study were females.

4.1.2.Age Range

Table 1 also shows that about 85% of supervisors interviewed were above 30 years against 18.75% for operational employees. It could be concluded that in general supervisors at GGL are on the average older than operational employees. This is logical since it takes a lot of time and experience to move up the ladder of management.

4.1.3. Education Level:

Table 1 indicates that 85% of supervisors interviewed were JSC/SSC where as 15% were above degree. 100% of operational employees have only Junior/Secondary School education. On the whole, all the people sampled had gone through some form of education.

4.1.4. Marital Status

From Table 70% of supervisors and 33% of operational employees were married. This indicates that maximum supervisors were married and maximum operational employees are single.

4.1.5, Work Experience

From Table 1, 50% of supervisors and 15% of operational employees had over 5 years working experience. Altogether, 85% supervisors and 52.50% of the operational employees had over 2 years working experience. It is apparent that most of the supervisors and operational employees have enough working experience and might have experienced some forms of conflict in their respective departments.

## 4.2. Nature of Conflicts

Figure 1 and 2, gives the ranked combined responses with their corresponding responses from supervisors and operational employees to the nature of conflicts at GGL. Almost 100% of the supervisors and 85.5% operational employees disagree that conflict occurs more frequently between supervisors than operational employees. Almost all the supervisors and operational employees agree that conflict can occur between an individual and a group, between groups, between individuals and within an individual. From Figure 1 and 2, conflicts among operational employees and conflicts among supervisors are almost same. This is due to the fact that supervisors and operational employee's educational background are almost same.

## 4.3. Causes of Conflicts

Figure 3 &4, gives the ranked combined responses with their corresponding responses from supervisors and operational employees to causes of conflict at GGL. All (100%) the supervisors and the operational employees are of the view that inadequate salary and remuneration, low job satisfaction, inability to involve operational employees in decision making are causes of conflict in GGL. All (100%) the supervisors and the operational employees are disagree that seeking of favors from superiors by operational employees is a Cause of conflict.

This intimation means high expectations for the performance of their duties and responsibilities usually counter their personal objectives and capabilities and thus put them under intense pressure which translates into conflict situations. Overload and stress is a source of conflict among operational employees more than supervisors. There is an inverse response about autocratic leadership style exhibited by supervisors (100% supervisor disagree and 100% operation employees agree) as a cause of conflict.

## 4.4. Effects of Conflicts

Figure 5 & 6 gives the ranked combined responses with their corresponding responses from supervisors and operational employees to the effects of conflicts at GGL. Responses from both supervisors (100%) and operational employees (100%) reveal that conflicts in Gemini Garments presents new approaches to solve problems, not good to promote conflict in the organization, Contrast responses from both supervisors (100%) think conflict not promotes harmony, cohesion and stronger relationship in the org. and operational employees (100%) reveal that conflict promotes harmony as well as conflict promotes harmony, cohesion and stronger relationship in the org. Furthermore, about 100% of the supervisors declare that conflict can help overcome the "yes man" syndrome in the org. and 75% of operational employees declare that conflict creates a climate of mistrust and suspicion and lowers productivity in the org.

On the other hand, some scholars view on the positive effects of conflicts to an organization. According to Filley (1975) and Brown (2008), when there is conflict between two parties, the conflict resolution process may help in clarifying the facts, stimulate a search for mutually acceptable solutions and force organisations like mining to search for new approaches to solving problem. However, in conclusion, the respondents (100 %) assert that it isn't good to promote conflict in the garments.

## 4.6. Strategies for Conflicts Resolution

Figure 7 & 8 gives the ranked combined responses with their corresponding responses from supervisors and operational employees to the strategies for conflicts resolution or management at GGL. Provision of resources for work is an essential strategy used to prevent conflicts in GGL as 100% of supervisors and operational employees both agree to the statement like formal procedure for conflict management exists in the org., attention is focus on the problem rather than personality issues, free expression of feelings or frustrations is promoted when conflict is being resolved, resources for work are provided at the right time to solve the problem or to manage the conflict.

On the other hand responses from both supervisors (100%) and operational employees (100%) both disagree the same statement like employees use informal procedure for conflict resolution or management, employees feel threatened to report untoward behaviors of colleagues or superiors, open communication system are established when there is conflict. But according to Henry Fayol (1900), this is advisable that fourteen principles of management may be adapted in the organization to manage conflict efficiently and effectively.

## 4.7. Findings of the Study

The major findings of the study are:

- The principal nature of conflict at GGL is frequently among operational employees than supervisors.
- The environment of GGL is mainly dominated by male, except supervisory level. Almost all respondents who participated in the research were not highly educated and experienced.
- Both supervisors and operational employees strongly affirm that inadequate salary and remuneration, low job satisfaction, inability to involve operational employees in decision making are the causes of conflict in GGL.
- There is an inverse response about autocratic leadership style exhibited by supervisors (100% supervisor disagree and 100% operation employees agree) as a cause of conflict.
- Respondents reveal that conflict create a climate of mistrust and suspicion, increases tension and hostilities, decreases effective communication and lowers the productivity. Hence, it is not good to promote conflict in the Gemini Garments Ltd.
- In managing conflict all respondents agree that formal procedure, attention is focus on the problem rather than personality issues, free expression of feelings or frustrations are promoted.

## 5. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations may be provided to solve the conflict based on findings of the study:

- Realistic targets should be set by top management so as to reduce work overload and stress in garments industries.
- Supervisors and Operational employees must be educated in attaining efficiency and effectiveness.
- The formal grievance procedure instituted in handling conflicts on the garments should be well communicated to employees.
- There should be conscious training programmes to equip both supervisors and operating employees with conflicts resolution and management strategies as they find the informal approach to be more convenient.
- There should be workers participation in management & good collective bargaining agreement to address issue of remuneration to improve job satisfaction.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS

Conflict in work situations may also give rise to organization related individual consequences: absenteeism, job dissatisfaction, apathy or indifference to work, role set members and the company, job stress and burnout, disloyalty, work sabotage, employee turnover, increased territoriality and resistance to change, decreased information sharing etc. Organizations are also affected by intra- and inter organizational conflicts that undermine organizational performance and efficiency. Organizations unable to resolve internal and external conflicts may not be able to survive in the long run.

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APPENDIX

**Figure 1: Nature of Conflict of Supervisors 'in GGL (here level contains value indicates %)**
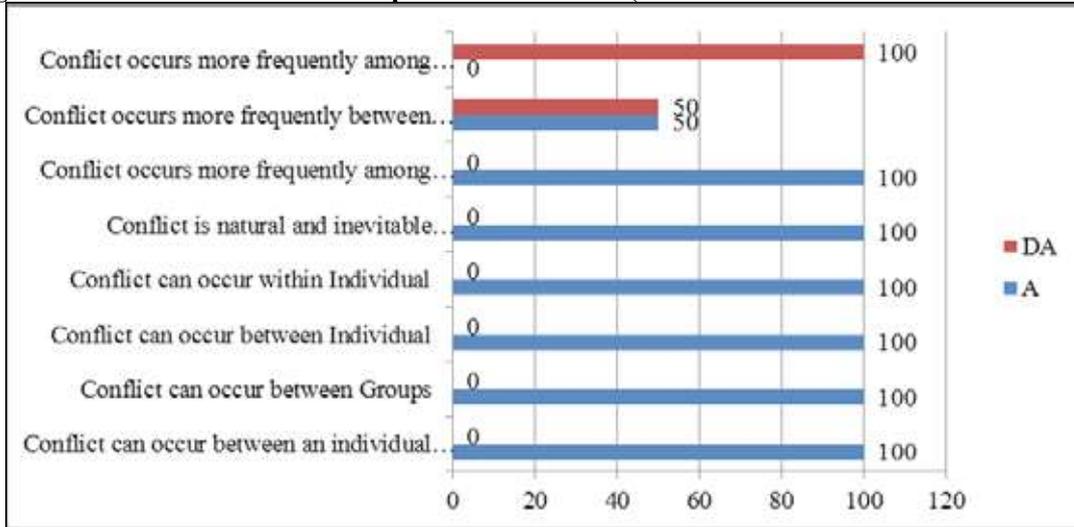


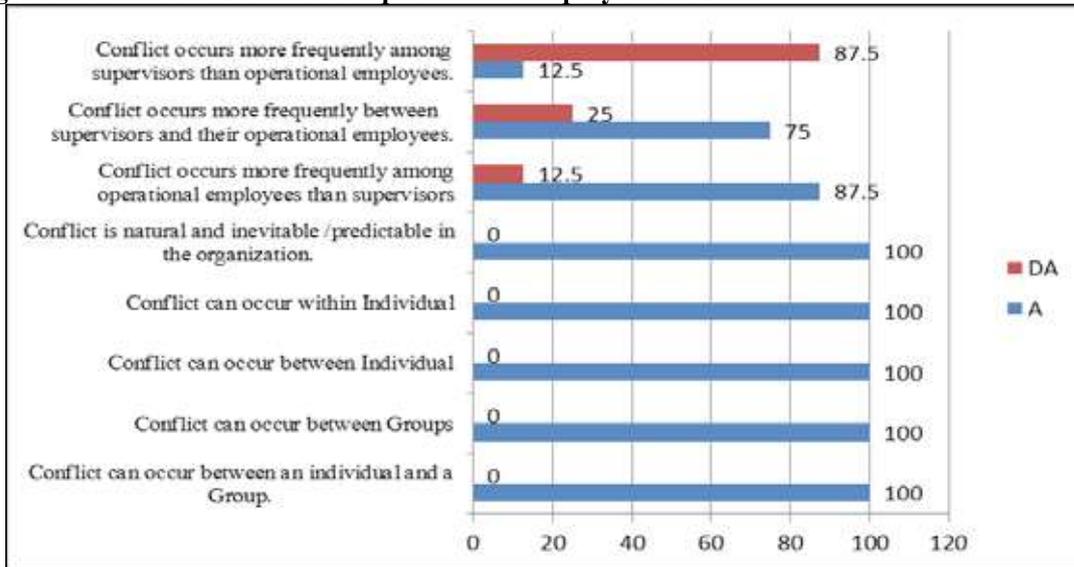**Figure 2: Nature of Conflict of Operational Employees in GGL**

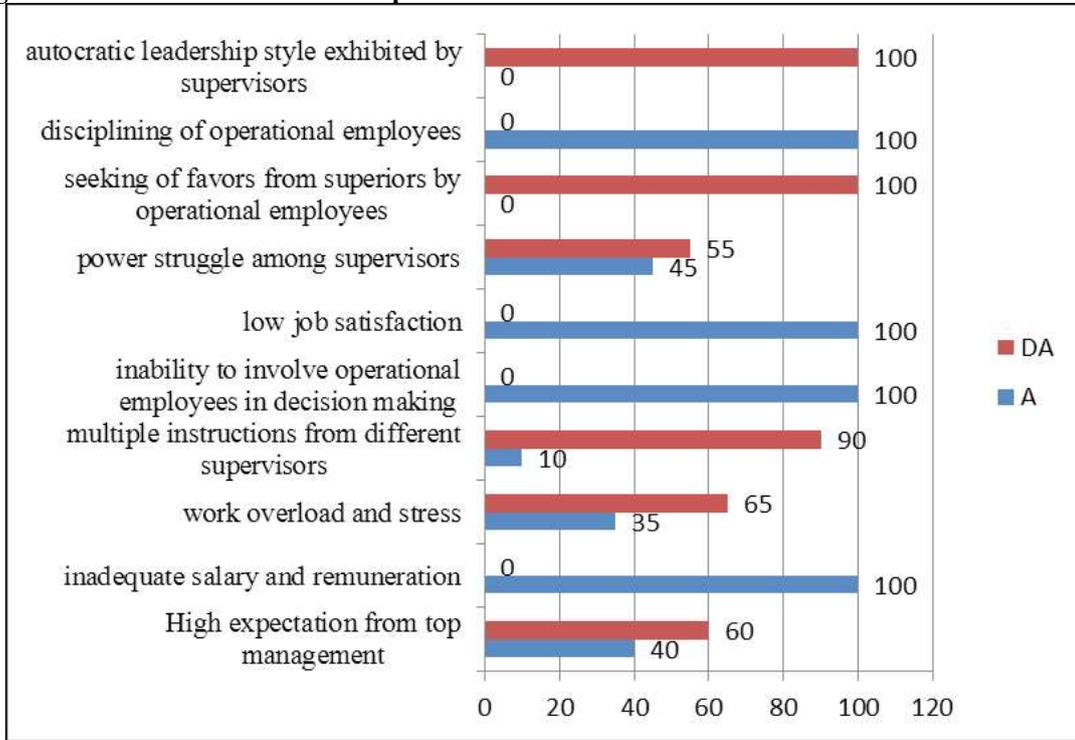**Figure 3: Causes of Conflict of Supervisors 'in GGL**



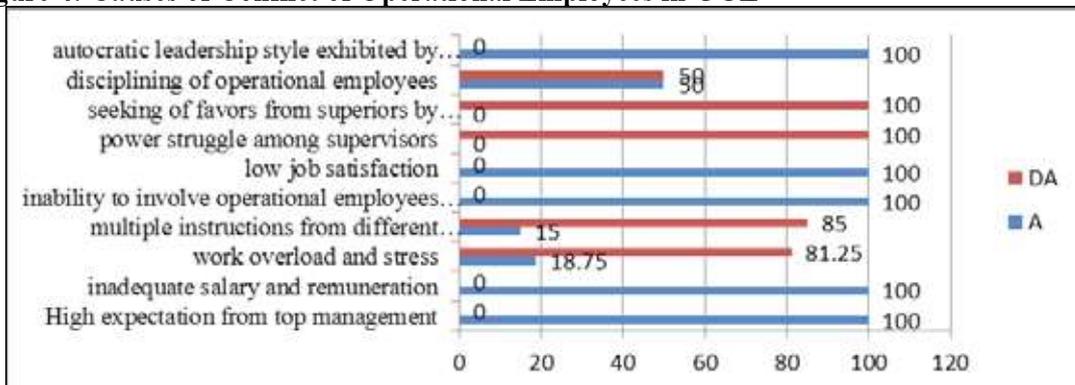**Figure 4: Causes of Conflict of Operational Employees in GGL**

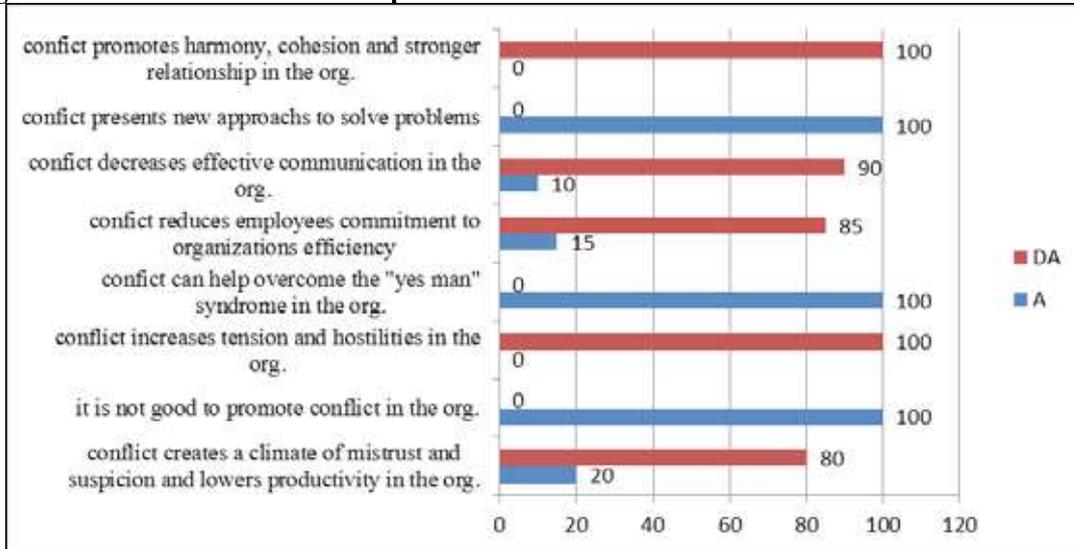**Figure 5: Effects of Conflict of Supervisors 'in GGL**



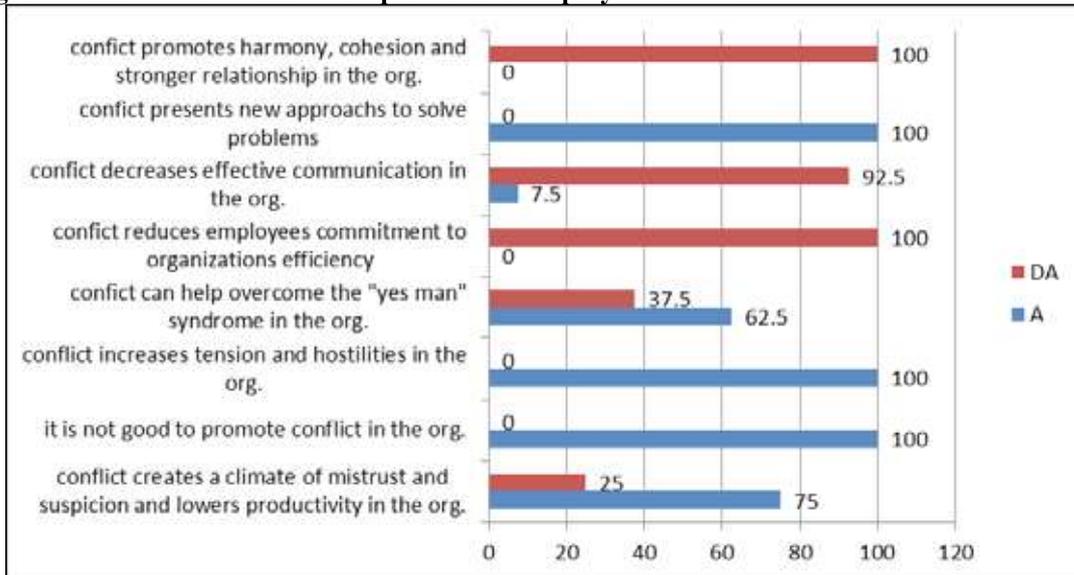**Figure 6: Effects of Conflict of Operational Employees in GGL**

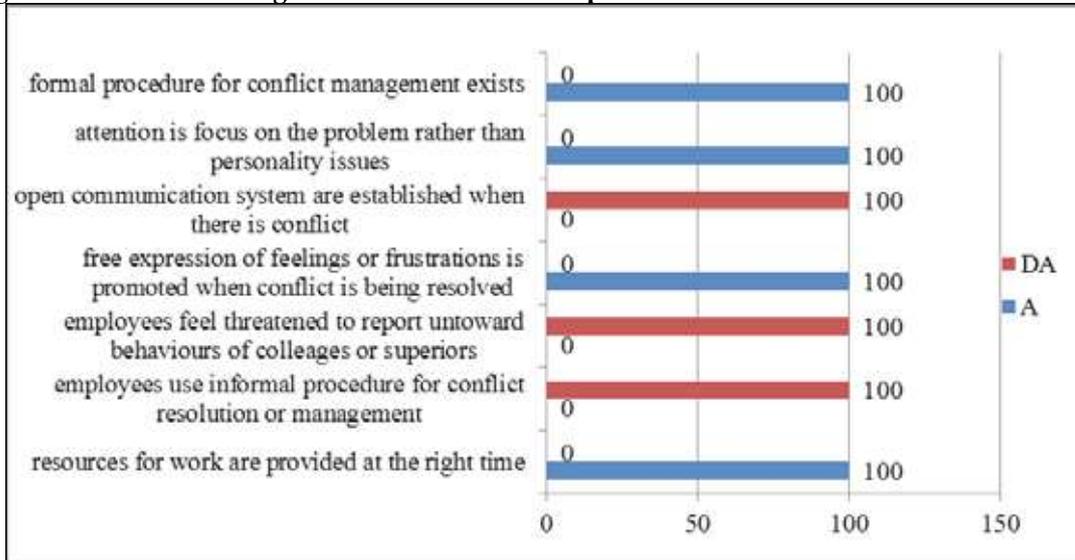**Figure 7: Conflict Management/ Resolution of Supervisors 'in GGL**



**Figure 8: Conflict Management/Resolution of Operational Employees in GGL**