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**IMPACT OF INDIVIDUAL STYLES OF
LINE SUPERVISION ON LABOUR PRODUCTIVITY
IN THE GARMENT INDUSTRY**

BY

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Abstract

Conducting research studies with the ultimate objective of evolving realistic ways and means of improving productivity in the garments industry is one area of paramount importance in the current context. Previous studies relating to productivity in the garments industry indicated a fairly high variation in labour productivity among different factories as well as among different production lines within factories. However, none of these research studies adequately explained the true reasons for this variation. Nevertheless, reasons for this variation appear to be many and varied, for which different views have been adduced.

Against this background, this research study took the view that many overt individual cultural values of line supervisors and their resultant culture-based styles, influence and explain a significant part of the variation in labour productivity levels, especially within and among our indigenous garments factories. Hence, the main objective of this study was aimed at examining and investigating to what extent these individual cultural values of the line supervisors and their resultant Culture-Based styles influenced and explained the variation in labour productivity, which was evident in the Garments industry.

With a view to achieve this objective, 40 Line Supervisors (approximately 20% of the relevant population) from Six (6) medium to large indigenous garments factories were selected as the representative sample. The survey method, along with personal interviews, were used as the main method of data collection. Furthermore, style-testing questionnaires and data collection sheets were utilised as the major tools to collect data.

The study adopted an inductive method as the main methodological approach. Hence, the data so collected were systematically analysed on an individual basis to identify common culture-based style types, various relationships and insights within and among cultural values, style types and labour productivity.

The findings of the study revealed a fairly high inter-line as well as inter-factory variation in labour productivity, in terms of line efficiency, effectiveness and economy. Line economy was

found to be the most critical indicator with the highest contribution to the variation. Moreover, a fairly high diversity in culture-based styles were noticeable among the sampled line supervisors. In effect, the study identified five distinct common cultural behaviour patterns (based on the cultural value combinations for the seven aspects of supervision studied) as culture-based style types (namely, **Style types A, B, C, D and E**). The study further revealed that Individual Decision-making, Systematic planning, Formal controlling, Aggressive communicating, Negative motivating, Task-oriented Conflict-resolving and Innovative Problem-solving were the most common cultural value orientations that were evident among supervisors. **Style type - A**, which was mostly characterised by these most common cultural values, was found to be the least productive in our cultural set-up. Furthermore, Collective Decision-making, Informal control, Innovative Problem -solving , and Positive motivating were found to be the most productive and positive cultural values which resulted in higher labour productivity. **Style type - B** which was mostly characterised by these cultural values appeared to be the most productive culture-based style type. Finally, the findings revealed that culture-based styles had a fairly high impact on labour productivity and hence explained a fairly high (Approx. 60%) portion of the variation in labour productivity.

Based on the above findings, it is recommended that the negative behaviour of the line supervisors should be effectively manipulated towards a positive and result-oriented behaviour, by understanding their respective cultural value orientations and their way of behaviour towards different aspects of supervision. A systematic value transformation process is recommended through concerted supervisory training and education. A commitment from the top, coupled with a dynamic leadership, was emphasised as the prerequisite to **create a positive organisational and a work culture**, so as to overcome many productivity-related problems. Finally, it is further suggested that managers in the Garments industry should be cautious about the variation in labour productivity and must lay more stress towards supervision and towards a realisation of the concept of value-driven supervision as a more effective means of improving labour productivity in their respective organisations.



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