

**Measurement Of Tact Necessary To Prevent Industrial Disputes Leading To Loss
Of Productivity----With Reference To Industries In South Bengal**

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Measurement Of Tact Necessary To Prevent Industrial Disputes Leading To Loss Of Productivity----With Reference To Industries In South Bengal

ABSTRACT

Industrial Disputes cause loss of productivity and decrease of profit, tending towards huge losses. It is, therefore, necessary to establish a benchmark level of tact or skill, that is required to ensure the prevention of Industrial Disputes. The benchmark level could be an empirical formula, or a model, or a set of regulatory data, that would be required to be satisfied. The procedure to be followed, requires a set of working hypothesis, a set of actual data collected from the industry, analyses of the data, results of the statistical tests of the data, and establishing an optimum model of tact, that would help deriving the set of regulatory data.

Keywords : benchmark, tact, model, regulatory, hypothesis, analyses, statistical, optimum

INTRODUCTION

The proposed guided research is aimed to study the skills necessary for the prevention of Industrial Disputes, that are rampant in India. The main emphasis of the guided research is laid on the strategic management of tact necessary to handle situations, that lead to Industrial Disputes, involving ethical issues, resulting in go-slow programs, cease-work programs, strikes as well as lock-outs. It is, therefore, necessary to establish a benchmark level of tact,

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that is required to ensure the prevention of Industrial Disputes, without compromising the ethics. The benchmark level could be an empirical formula, or a set of regulatory data, that would be required to be satisfied. The procedure to be followed, requires a set of working hypothesis, a set of actual data collected from the industry, analyses of the data, and drawing the conclusion on the basis of the analyses.

Furthermore, the benchmark level is based on sound psychological theory that has a proven track record. Despite the fact, that it is theory-based, the approach is very pragmatic. Rather than dealing with the psychological causes of behavior, like attitudes and personalities, it deals with the problem directly. It is very difficult for managers to change attitudes, and even more difficult, if not impossible, for them to change someone's personality. Behavior, on the other hand, can be changed using techniques that are relatively easy to learn and apply. Unlike some of the traditional approaches, the behavioral approach does not look for deep, internal causes of behavior such as attitudes or personality. Instead, it concentrates on the behavior itself, and on ways of influencing behavior to bring about the desired change. The process of specifying the problems of the people in the industry, in terms of behavior is not always easy.

Specifying the problems in behavioral terms makes the people more amenable to solution.

Behavior can be changed, personalities cannot. Some of the additional advantages of specifying problems in behavioral terms include that the employees become aware of precisely what behavior is expected of them. It may be required that employees are already aware of what behavior is required, but that is often not the case. Another advantage is that specifying problems in behavioral terms often avoids negative emotional reactions to

criticism.

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HYPOTHESIS

The working hypothesis of the guided research would consider the routes to resolution as:

- a) *Conciliation* : It involves independent, neutral third parties. They act as messengers and interpreters to identify the causes of the differences, the relative significance and the importance of the issues and positions taken by both sides – from ‘easily traded’ to ‘deal brokers’ - to help develop ideas and mutually own joint decisions. Conciliators do not recommend solutions.

- (b) *Mediation* : It involves an independent, neutral, third party, who assists sides to resolve differences and come to an agreement. This is more proactive, as mediators may suggest their own proposals, for a resolution. However, such sides are non-binding on both or all sides.

- (c) *Arbitration* : It involves referral to an independent, neutral third party, with both sides agreeing beforehand to abide by decisions. The arbitrator hears the agreements of both sides and then comes to a decision. The process is often criticized for the perceived tendency of arbitrators to award decisions alternately, regardless of the merits of each case, in order to be even handed and avoid the risk of appearing to favor one side over the other.

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(d) *Intervention* : In an ideal world, with enough time and goodwill on both sides, disagreements could be settled and resolved without recourse to conciliation, mediation or arbitration. Hence, intervention remains the final option when both sides in a dispute, are unable to reduce their own differences.

Apart from conciliation, mediation, arbitration and intervention, the guided research takes into consideration certain concepts of measurement, that assists in reaching the goal, that is, the establishing of an empirical formula, or a set of regulatory data, that measures the tact for management, necessary to prevent Industrial Disputes, leading to loss of productivity, with reference to the industries in the southern districts of the state of West Bengal.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

A visit to industries was made for the purpose of the collection of data. The primary data was collected by interviews, questionnaires, conducting seminar and conferences. The secondary data was collected from annual reports, rule books and records of resolved cases, and would be used, only if found necessary.

The four elements in reflective research, which is the normal practice in such cases, are :

- a) *Systematic techniques in research procedures*-----Qualitative research should follow

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some well-reasoned logic in interacting with the empirical material, and use rigorous techniques for the processing of the data.

- b) *Clarifications of the primacy of interpretation*----Research is seen as a fundamentally interpretive activity, which in contrast to other activities, is aware of this fact. The recognition that all research work includes and is driven by an interpreter, who often interacts with other interpreters, provides the key to a qualified, and methodological view.
- c) *Awareness of the political-ideological character of research*-----Management is a social phenomenon embedded in a political and ethical context. We can hardly avoid either supporting or challenging the existing social conditions.
- d) *Reflection in relation to the problem of representation and authority*-- The researcher's claim to authority and the established claim to reproduce some extrinsic reality, are equally undermined : the researching subject and the researched object are both called into question.

The levels of measurement refer to a set of rules that defines permissible mathematical functions, that can be performed on numbers or scores produced by a measure. The four levels of measurement used in the study are :

- a) *Nominal Level of Measurement* : It is the lowest and the most simple level of

measurement. When a variable is classified into several sub-classes, it is said that the variable in question is measured on a nominal level.

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- b) *Ordinal Level of Measurement* : When the relative position of objects or persons with respect to some characteristics are defined, measurements are possible on ordinal levels. The fundamental requirement of an ordinal level of measurement is that one be able to determine the order of positions of objects or persons in terms of characteristics under study. Ordinal level measurements are considered of higher level than nominal level, because, in addition to being mutually exclusive (feature of nominal level of measurement), the categories have a fixed order.
- c) *Interval Level of Measurement* : Interval level, between the categories of measurement, has equal spacing, in addition to the characteristics of nominal level (mutually exclusive) and ordinal level (having fixed order). In interval measures, the positions are not only ordered either in ascending order (lower, middle and higher) or in descending order (higher, middle and lower), but the intervals of measurement are also equal.
- d) *Ratio level of Measurement* : Ratio level of measurement is the highest level of measurement. It has all the characteristics of interval level of measurement, except that, the zero point is absolute in this case, rather than arbitrary, as in the interval level of measurement. This means that the ratio level of measurement contains the characteristics of nominal level of measurement (mutually exclusive), ordinal level of

measurement (fixed order), and interval level of measurement (equal spacing, in addition to an absolute zero).

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The process of research used is illustrated in Figure-1.

DATA ANALYSIS

The industries in the southern districts of the state of West Bengal are frequently plagued by Industrial Relations problems. There are highly volatile unions of workmen, who resort to non-cooperation, go-slow movements, cease-work movements and strikes. These activities are harmful in an otherwise stable environment. These are termed as Industrial Disputes, and are responsible for the loss of productivity and profit in the organization, leading to lock-outs and closure. As a result, several families are financially ruined and the number of suicides among the employees and the members of their families are on the rise. There is a general collapse of the work environment. In order to obtain a clear and specific understanding of the problem, data were collected and analyzed from five sample organizations and interviewing of the employees

of the five sample organizations was made by the questionnaire method. The questionnaires had several sections and the responses were analyzed on the basis of the marks obtained by an employee. The responses were then analyzed with the test of significance by two-standard deviation method, parametric tests of difference, non-parametric test of association, and test

for measure of association. The nature and details of samples are given in Table-1. Most of the problems originate from the fixation of wages, incentives and overtime rates, in contravention to the wishes of the workmen's unions. The subsequent interventions and negotiations by the management do not always bring about a favorable result. Not much tact is used by the management to prevent the Industrial Disputes, leading to loss of productivity.

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RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

a) Measurement Of Tact :

It has been observed that the responses of the managers in the organization, are, from time to time, delayed, to the notices or the demands of the workmen's unions. This leads to the aggravation of the problem – the unions intensify their demands and build up a psychological war-zone in the organization. As a result, the productivity begins to be affected. As more and more people start taking interest in the treatment being meted out to the leaders of the unions, the more is the downward trend of the productivity.

Duration, as its name suggests, is a measure of how long a behavior lasts, namely, the exercising of tact. If the objective is to increase the contributions a manager makes, in the 'union- management' meetings, a measure of how many contributions (frequency) are made, may not tell the whole story. It is possible that the manager makes five 'contributions' during the course of the meeting, but these are merely 'yes' or 'no' responses to questions. Of more interest may be the duration of these contributions i.e. the total length of time, during which, the individual was contributing. Duration will, in these circumstances, be a better measure.

The degree of accuracy required, will determine how the duration is measured. It may be possible, to measure the length of time for which the tact is exercised, with a stopwatch, or use a tick-list, for five-minute blocks.

Whereas, duration concentrates on how long the tact is exercised, latency is a measure of the delay between the instant of time when the tact should occur and when it actually occurs.

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The graph, depicting the responses to the demands or the notices served by the union leaders, is illustrated in Figure-2.

b) Intervention As A Tool To Gain Cooperation :

Human beings tend to become competitive in situations, where they feel threatened.

Competition leads to low trust and by definition , low cooperation. For example, there is often rivalry and low trust between shifts and between shop floor and management. In most situations, this leads to lowered effectiveness. It will certainly lead to a less than smooth introduction of change. The situation will be made worse if there is suspicion concerning the activities of any consultant involved. It is important, therefore, to be aware of any sign of competition and to know how to deal with it, or better still, know how to avoid it in the first place. There are a number of factors which determine how well people work together. Three such factors are of particular importance :

- 1) The extent to which people trust each other – the level of trust can vary from very

high to very low.

- 2) How open people or groups are with each other – the level of openness can be high or low.
- 3) Whether there is cooperation or competition – there can be high cooperation or high competition.

All three of these factors can have significance for the relationship between the participants and

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whoever is implementing the scheme. They are also important aspects of the relationship between managers and subordinates in the organization. Depending on past experience of consultants, there may be low trust in outside experts. It is also not uncommon for levels of trust between managers and workers on the shop floor to be low. The issue is not only how much people believe what is said but also how much confidence they have that others will deliver what they have promised.

In case it is assumed that we are advocating a trend of ‘love and trust’ for all ills, it is worth pointing out that we are not saying that openness and trust are appropriate in all situations and that one should always go for cooperation. Whether cooperation or competition is most appropriate, depends on the type of situation – whether it is zero sum or non-zero sum.

A zero sum situation is one where one person’s losses are the other person’s winnings and

vice- versa.

A non-zero sum situation is one where there is some outside influence, which can add to, or subtract from, the total gains available. In zero sum situations, competition can be appropriate. In non-zero sum situations, competition will always lead to both sides losing (lose-lose). Cooperation will lead to both sides winning (win-win). Most 'real life' situations are non-zero sum. If people cooperate, both sides gain. This applies to everything

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from war to trade union negotiations. In almost every industrial dispute that has reached the stage of strike action, both sides have lost more than was gained by the strike. In the final settlement, the strikers rarely recoup their losses in terms of lost pay or if they do, it takes a considerable time. Management also loses heavily in lost production and subsequent lost profits. If they could have cooperated and reached a quick agreement, both sides could have gained. Similar considerations apply to change initiatives. If a spirit of cooperation can be maintained, a successful conclusion can be reached quickly and with minimum cost. If low trust and competition develop, time is wasted, and the whole process can be jeopardized.

Most real life zero-sum situations are relatively trivial. In these situations, competition is appropriate. There is, in fact, little point in doing otherwise. However, it is better not to get involved unless we are better at the game than the other person, otherwise we would surely lose. We are unaware of any such situation within the work of an organization.

c) *The Model Of 'Tact':*

The model of 'Tact' is illustrated in Figure-3.

We have to observe that the solution point Q of the demand varies as a continuous function of the threat point N . Also, there is a helpful geometrical characterization of the way Q depends on N . The solution point Q is the contact point with B of a hyperbola ($\alpha \beta$) whose asymptotes are the vertical and horizontal lines through N . Let T be the tangent at Q to this hyperbola. 'P' is a point where there is a continuous function 'h' of an individual 'i'.

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If linear transformations are applied to the utility functions, N can be made the origin and Q the point $(1, 1)$. Now T will have slope -1 and the line NQ will have slope $+1$. The essential point is that, slope $T = \text{minus } (-) \text{ slope } NQ$, because this is a property that is not destroyed by the linear transformation of the utilities. T will be a support line for the set B (that is, a line, such that all points of B are either on the lower left side of T or are on T itself).

We can state that the criterion is that if NQ has a positive slope and a support line T , for B passes through Q with a slope equal but opposite to the slope of NQ , then Q is the solution point for the threat point N . If NQ is horizontal or vertical, and is itself a support line for B , and if Q is the rightmost or uppermost of the points common to B and NQ , then again Q is the solution point S for N , and one of these cases must hold if Q is the solution point of N . This criterion is a necessary and sufficient one to prevent the loss of productivity.

Any support line of B with a contact point Q on the upper-right boundary of B , determines a complimentary line through Q , with equal but opposite slope. All points on the line segment,

in which this complimentary line intersects B, are points, which, as threat points, would have Q as corresponding solution point. The class of all these line segments is a ruling of B by line segments which intersect, if at all, only on the upper-right boundary of B. Given a threat point

N, its solution point is the upper-right end of the segment passing through it (unless N is on more than one ruling and hence is on the upper-right boundary and is its own solution point).

FINDINGS AND CONTRIBUTIONS

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We now need to derive the model of 'Optimum Tact', after considering the various social divisions. These social divisions are illustrated in Figure-4.

We can now analyze the strategic management of threat, the threat formed by the first move and with pay-off function determined by the solution of the demand. This pay-off is determined by the location of N, specifically by the ruling on which N falls.

Now, if there are threats from two individuals, one individual's threat is held fixed, say, individual one's at t_1 , then the position of N is a function of the other individual's threat, t_2 .

The co-ordinates of N, $p_1(t_1, t_2)$ and $p_2(t_1, t_2)$ are linear functions of t_2 . Hence, the transformation (t_2 goes to N), defined by this situation, is a linear transformation of the space S_2 of individual two's threats to B. That part of the image of S_2 that falls on the most

favorable (for individual two) ruling, will contain the image of the threats that would be best as replies, to individual one's fixed threat t_1 . This set of best replies must be a convex, compact subset of S_2 because of the linearity and the continuity of the transformation of S_2 into B.

The continuity of N as a function of t_1 and t_2 , and the continuity of Q as a function of N, ensure that the pay-off function, defined for the threat by solving the demand, is a continuous function of the threats. This is sufficient to make each individual's set of best replies, an upper semi- continuous function of the threat being replied to. Now, let us consider any pair of threats (t_1, t_2) . For each threat of the pair, the other individual has a set of best replies. Let $R(t_1, t_2)$ be the set

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of all pairs which contains one threat from each of the two sets of replies. R will be an upper semi- continuous function of (t_1, t_2) in the space of opposed pairs of threats and $R(t_1, t_2)$ will always be a convex set in the space, $S_1 \times S_2$.

The Kakutani Fixed Point Theorem tells us that there is some pair (t_{10}, t_{20}) that is contained in its set $R(t_{10}, t_{20})$, which amounts to saying that each threat is a best reply to the other. Thus we

have obtained an equilibrium point in the management of tact. It is noted that this

equilibrium point is formed by pure strategies in the tact, as a mixed strategy could involve randomization over several threats.

The pair (t_{10}, t_{20}) also has minimum and maximum properties. Since the final pay-off is determined by the position of Q on the upper-right boundary of B, which is a negatively sloping curve, each individual's pay-off is a monotone decreasing function of the other. So, if individual one sticks to t_{10} , individual two cannot make one worse off than he does by using t_{20} , without improving his own position and he cannot do this because (t_{10}, t_{20}) is an equilibrium point. Thus t_{10} assures individual one of the equilibrium pay-off and t_{20} accomplishes the same for individual two.

The model of 'Optimum Tact' is now established very much like a zero-sum situation, and one can readily see that if one individual were to choose his threat first and inform the other, rather than simultaneously choosing threats, this would not make any difference, because

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there is a 'saddle-point' in pure strategies. It is however different with the demand. The right to make the first demand would be quite valuable, so the simultaneity here is essential. The model of 'Optimum Tact' is illustrated in Figure-5.

To summarize, we have now derived the model of 'Optimum Tact', found the values of the threat to the two individuals, and shown that there are optimal threats and optimal demands (the optimal demands are the values).

From the detailed analyses of the data, and the results of the several tests on the answers of the questionnaires, we find that the exercising of 'Optimum Tact' mainly comprises of three skills, with a set of sub-skills, that have been utilized to resolve the crises, as mentioned in Table-2. These are :

- a) own effectiveness --- time management, assertiveness, and being realistic
- b) interactive skills --- nonverbal communication, influencing skills, and handling feelings
- c) intervention skills --- being systematic, decision making, and promoting healing and recovery

It is therefore established that these three skills, along with their sub-skills, are the considerable parameters for the exercising of 'Optimum Tact', necessary to prevent any industrial dispute, with reference to the industries in the southern districts of the state of West

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Bengal.

When the samples tend to consider that their problem is unique, it will be helpful to bring them back to reality, by projecting that the other samples are facing the same problem. By universalizing the problem in this way, the anxiety may be reduced in intensity. The ultimate goal of this research is the generalizability of the findings of the study. In this research, findings which are generalizable to a considerably large number of situations and cases, can only contribute to the knowledge base of management

practice. The generalizability of findings is achieved here through the repetition of the study by taking more measurements.

We now establish the following six steps, that need to be taken for the exercising of ‘Optimum Tact’, necessary to prevent any industrial dispute and loss of productivity :

a) Measure of Reading : For theory to be used to the best effect, it is important that we break down the barriers by challenging the assumption that reading is for students only or staff in training and not for full-fledged professionals. Some may argue that they do not have enough time to read. However, there are two points that need to be made in response to this. First, time spent on reading is an investment of time and can, by enhancing our practice, save time in the long run. Second, reading can increase our levels of intelligence and job satisfaction by giving us a broader perspective and greater insights into the Industrial Disputes.

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b) Measure of Asking : ‘Asking’ can apply in two ways. First, in relation to reading, much of the literature of industrial relations, are written in a jargonistic academic style, that makes it difficult to understand. It can be helpful, then, to ask other people about such issues so that we can get past this barrier. There is much to be gained from creating an open, enquiring, mutually supportive atmosphere in which all professionals, not just students, can learn from each other.

c) Measure of Watching : There is much to be learned from developing an enhanced

level of awareness in terms of observational skills. Much of the time, we may miss significant issues because we treat situations as routine and commonplace. We need to remember that every situation is unique in some ways and so we need to be attuned to what is happening and not make blanket assumptions. Theoretical knowledge can help us understand and explain our experience, but if our experience is closed by a failure to be sensitive to what is happening, then we shall not notice that there is anything to be explained. Exercising tact relies on developing a sensitivity to what is happening around us.

d) *Measure of Feeling* : The emotional dimension of profession, as we have seen, is a very important one. Our emotional responses, can, at times, be painful and difficult to deal with. At the other extreme, using theory can, sometimes, be seen as cold and technical.

However,

this does not mean that the two – thinking and feeling – cannot be reconciled. Thought can help us understand, and, therefore, deal with feeling and feelings can help bring theory to life, turn concepts into working tools, and thereby develop the skill of tact.

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e) *Measure of Talking* : Sharing views about work situations, and how these can be dealt with, encourages a broad perspective. It provides the opportunity for people to learn from each other's experience, to find a common ground and identify differences of approach.

Constructive dialogues about the methods of work, reasons for taking particular courses of action, and, so on, can be an excellent way of broadening horizons, deepening understanding and enhancing skills. Such dialogues also help to create an open and supportive working environment, and this, in itself, can be an important springboard, for the practice of the skill of

tact.

f) *Measure of Thinking* : There are two main barriers to a thoughtful approach to practice. These are routines and pressure. A routine approach amounts to working ‘on automatic pilot’ and is clearly a dangerous way of dealing with the sensitive issues. Pressure can also stand in the way of thinking about our practice. If we are very busy, we have to be wary of allowing ourselves to be pressurized into not thinking about what we are doing. We need to remain in control of our workload so that we are able to think about our actions. Thinking time should be seen as an essential part of the development of the skill of tact, rather than a luxury that has to be dispensed with, when pressure is on.

SUMMARY

The model of ‘Optimum Tact’ offers the use of a theory base to help us understand the common themes, and a focus on creativity to help us deal with the unique aspects of each situation we

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encounter. The steps mentioned herein, are not the only ones that can be taken for the strategic management of tact, but they should provide a good ‘launch pad’ for working out patterns of practice, for further development of the process.

The future challenges of research include the examination of the concepts and implications of

core self-evaluations for self-regulatory processes; testing of the validity of goal-setting theory and in particular, the dynamics of goal setting and goal revision in field settings; comparing and contrasting the concept of a learning goal with a performance goal, in terms of the mechanisms involved; integrating different theories and models of motivation with a view to developing a more coherent theoretical framework; theoretically integrating considerations of identity, commitment and psychological contract, investigating processes of psychological contracting, and investigating two-party relationships within a psychological contract framework.

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Figure 1 : The Process of Research

Identification of Problems

Assess the
Intervention Effects

Need Assessment

Introduce
Intervention

Selection of Management
Research Design

Pre-Intervention Measurement

Figure 2 : The Measurement Of Tact

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Figure-3 : The Model Of 'Tact'

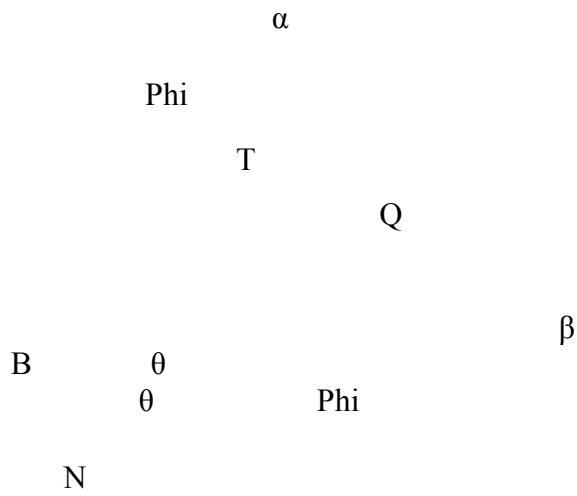
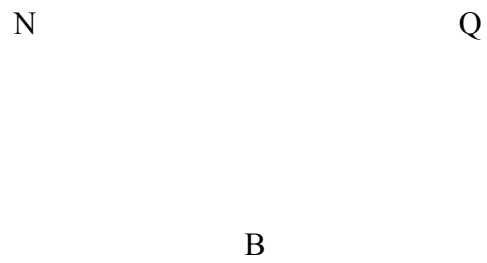


Figure-4 : The Social Divisions

SOCIAL DIVISIONS

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Figure-5 : The Model Of 'Optimum Tact'



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Table-1*The Nature And Details Of Samples*

Serial Number	Details of Sample	Nature of Industry

<i>Sample 1</i>	Indian Oil Corporation Limited (MD), Eastern Region Lube Blending Plant, Kolkata P – 68, Karl Marx Sarani, Paharpur, Kolkata-700043	Petroleum
<i>Sample 2</i>	Bhargab Engineering Works P – 292, Benaras Road, District : Howrah, West Bengal, 711108	Steel
<i>Sample 3</i>	SARANGSoft India Private Limited SDF Building, Module 428 and 429, Sector – 5, Salt Lake City, Kolkata - 700091	Information Technology (owned by NRI)
<i>Sample 4</i>	Gopal Hosiery 61, Ibrahimpur Road, Jadavpur, District : 24 Paraganas (S), West Bengal, 700032	Manufacturing
<i>Sample 5</i>	Jayshree IT Consultants Limited Y–13, Block EP, Sector -5, Salt Lake City, Kolkata-700091	Information Technology (owned by Indian)

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Table-2*The Results Of The Analyses Of The Data*

Serial Number	Union of workmen	Industrial Dispute History	Reason	Pending Demands

<i>Sample 1</i>	Recognized and unrecognized	Nil	Good personal relationship of management with union leaders	Salary revision from 2007, revision of LTA, new grades for better career progression, no outsourcing to contractors, and wage agreement on 5- yearly basis
<i>Sample 2</i>	Unrecognized	Non- cooperation and Go-Slow	Salary hike and medical facilities	Uniform salary hike, uniform rate of incentive and overtime, and commencement of recruitment
<i>Sample 3</i>	Unrecognized	Non- cooperation and Go-Slow	Salary hike and increment	Uniform salary hike and increment, restarting LTA that was stopped from 2009, introduction of overtime for working beyond working hours
<i>Sample 4</i>	Recognized and unrecognized	Lock-out	Failure to meet benchmark rate of production, as given by Minimum Wages Act, 1948	Payment of overtime to meet benchmark rate of production, 20% festival bonus, increase in the number of days of annual leave
<i>Sample 5</i>	Unrecognized	Lock-out	Agitation due to stoppage of salary caused by recession	Reopening of organization and payment of arrear salary

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