



Interactive and Conflict Behaviour

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Abstract: The potential causes for conflict include communication, structure and personal variables. Research has disclosed that "potential for conflict increases when either too little or too much communication takes place." The term 'structure' includes such variables as size, specialization, standardization, styles of leadership and degree of routinisation. Research indicates "that size and specialization act as forces to stimulate conflict." The potential of conflict tends to be greatest where group members are younger.

Key words: specialization, Human Relationalists, stimulate conflict

Introduction :

"Conflict is that behaviour by organization members which is expended in opposition to other members".

Conflict must be perceived by the parties to it. Additional commonalities among most conflict definitions are the concepts of opposition, scarcity, blockage and the assumption that there are two or more parties whose interests or goals appear to be incompatible. The traditionalists view of conflict was negative and it was employed with such terms as violence and destruction. Conflicts are associated with more subtle and non-violent types of oppositions such as arguments, criticism, disagreements and disputes. Infact, conflict leaps to our mind-fights, riots and even wars. The traditionalists viewed that conflicts were inherently destructive. They abhorred conflict, competition and disagreements. They felt that conflict reduction could be resulted in high performance. F.W. Taylor believed that conflict had to be avoided or quickly resolved.

The human relationalists argued that conflict was a natural occurrence in all groups and organizations. They recognized the inevitability of conflict and advised managers to live with it.

They even subscribed that conflict might benefit the performance of a group. Though Mayo felt that conflict was a social disease and cooperation of social help, the overall view of the Human Relationalists was that some conflicts were necessary if an organization was to avoid stagnation.

The interactionists approach was in favour of conflict in the sense that a "harmonious, peaceful, tranquil and cooperative group was likely to become static, apathetic and non-responsive to needs for change and innovation." Their contribution, in simple, was to maintain minimal level of conflict by an ongoing enterprise. This will keep the inmates of the organization "alive, self-critical and creative." Robbins points out that constructive conflict is both valuable and necessary. Without conflict, there would be few new challenges ; there would be no stimulation to think through ideas.

It is said that conflicts and problems are to be desired and welcome, for it is from them we learn. Gita says "out of conflict comes creation." Life itself is a product of conflict, when life without a struggle is a dead existence. As such, the task of management is to manage the level of conflict.



Some of the new assumptions about conflict include : it is inevitable, integral to the nature of change and a minimal level of conflict is optimal.

Conflict and organizational Effectiveness :

Interactionists approach does not argue that all conflicts are functional. Certainly there are conflicts that negatively affect organizational effectiveness. The manager’s job is to create an environment in which conflict is healthy but not allowed to run pathological extremes.

In the interactionists view, it is undesirable for conflict levels to be too high or too low.

Situation	Level of conflict	Type of conflict	Organisation’s internal features	Organizational effectiveness outcome
A	Low / None	Dysfunctional	Stagnant, Apathetic, Lack of new ideas	LOW
B	Optimal	Functional	Viable, Self-critical, Innovative	HIGH
C	High	Dysfunctional	Disruptive Choatic, Non-Cooperative	LOW

Situation “B” represents the optimum level. The area from “A” upon “B” requires the manager to stimulate conflict to achieve full benefits from its functional properties. The area to the right of “B” demands resolution efforts to reduce the conflict level.

Causes and sources of Conflict: The potential causes for conflict include communication, structure and personal variables. Research has disclosed that “potential for conflict increases when either too little or too much communication takes place.” The term ‘structure’ includes such variables as size, specialization, standardization, styles of leadership and degree of routinisation. Research indicates “that size and specialization act as forces to stimulate conflict.” The potential of conflict tends to be greatest where group members are younger. Close style of leadership enhances conflict potential but the evidence is not strong. There is high correlation between too much reliance on participation and conflict. Personal variables include individual value systems and idiosyncracies and differences. The important sources for creating the potential for conflict are

based on differences in value systems (value judgements). Research demonstrates that potential conflict arises when the individuals in organization remain dogmatic and with a sense of low esteem.

Dimensions Of Conflict :The dimensions of conflict and stress have been becoming increasingly significant from international, national, societal, organizations, group, interpersonal and intraindividual points of view. Robins defines conflict as “all kinds of opposition or antagonistic reaction.” Conflict occurs when organizational units are interdependent, share resources and perceive the goals as being incompatible. Conflict can be identified on three levels, viz., perception, feelings and behaviour. One can observe that conflict exists because the goals of two parties are incompatible and because the scope for interference is present. Conflict may



cause such results as anger and mistrust between the groups.

Conflict results in behaviour which is the reaction to the first two levels. Research reveals that managers spend about 21 percent of their time in the States in dealing with conflict.

Incompatibility : The incompatibility between values and goals gives rise to conflict. Examples include ego versus control, self-actualisation (creativity) versus specialization, freedom versus efficiency, social concern versus company goals, independence versus dependence, achievement versus fear of failure, cooperation versus competition and approval versus hostility. Conflicts are concerned with arguments, criticism, disagreements, and disputes. They appear to be "subtle and non-violent nature of opposition."

In fact, conflict involves more than two persons who have opposite values who are intolerant, who ignore delicate shades of grey and who are hasty to jump to conclusions. This results in frustration, sense of failure and even loss of self-esteem. It forms an intra-individual perspective where process of deciding "to be or not to be." Conflicts have both positive and negative outcomes, which depend on their nature and intensity. There are two types of conflict. Functional conflict is constructive (constructive confrontation) and supports the goals of the organization and improves the performance. Dysfunctional conflict hinders organizational performance and generally deals with the personalities rather than issues.

Forms of conflict : Conflicts can be identified into one of many forms. Steers has come out four distinct forms of conflict. They are :

- 1) Goal conflict in which a person or a group desires a different goal or outcome than others.
- 2) Cognitive conflict in which a person or group holds ideas that are incompatible with those of others.
- 3) Affective conflict in which the attitudes of a person or group are incompatible with those of others.
- 4) Behavioural conflict in which one person or group does something that is unacceptable to others.

Structural Areas : There are four structural areas in an organization in which conflict occurs. They are hierarchical conflict, functional conflict, line and staff conflict and formal and informal conflict.

- 1) There may be a conflict between management and the operatives. The factors that encourage conflict are size, hierarchy (vertical) and horizontal specialization.
- 2) There may be a conflict between production and sales departments in an organization. Here the source of conflict arises out of interdependence.
- 3) There may be a conflict between the line and staff where staff personnel look for change and line units insist on stability.
- 4) The norms for performance of informal and formal organizations may not be similar. Hence conflict occurs.

Conflict Resolution : Conflict resolution aims at reducing or ending interpersonal and intergroup conflicts. The temperaments of two individuals are incompatible and their personalities clash causing damage to their self-image and



self-esteem affecting their emotions. Such conflicts may also develop from failures of communication or differences in perception.

Self-disclosure and feedback approaches tend to reduce interpersonal conflicts. When people wish to reveal (communicate) themselves to one another, particularly face to face, their exposure of physical and emotional states is sometimes disturbing.

Self-exposure or self-revelation in terms of personal matters such as loves and hates, beliefs and fears, worries and anxieties invites troubles in a competitive society where an atmosphere of concealment prevails. However, communication specialists are of the

opinion that self-disclosure reveals more of ourselves to others thereby helping us to understand one another better. Self-disclosure is considered to be one of mutual acceptance, good-will or mutual self-defence systems. It is "the process through which one person lets himself or herself be known by another."

Johari Window : Joseph Luft and Harry Ingham developed a model analyzing interpersonal conflict. This Johari Model helps to identify the conflicts that may develop between oneself and the others.

It is a two person interaction where self can be thought of as "me" and others can be thought of as "you"

JOHARI WINDOW

	The person known about the others	The person does not know about the others
The person knows about himself/herself	Open Self	Hidden Self
The person does not know about himself/herself	Blindself	Undiscovered Self

Open Self : The person knows about himself or herself and about the other. There would be openness and compatibility. There is no need to be defensive. Here conflict rarely arises.

Blind Self : The person knows about the other but not about himself or herself. He or she may be unintentionally irritating the other. The other person feels like telling him or her but hesitates to displease him or her. Potential interpersonal conflict may arise.

Undiscovered Self : Likely to be the most dangerous situation. He or she does not know about himself or herself and much

less of other. As such, there will be much misunderstandings. Interpersonal conflict is inevitable.

Modes of Resolving Conflicts :

According to Thomas, there are five modes of conflict which may be resolved as under :

1. competing (uncooperative). It indicates to promote one's own interest at the cost of others.
2. Accommodating (cooperative). It devotes to accommodate other's concern at personal expense.



3. Avoiding (Uncooperative). It is the case of neglecting not only the self-interest but also the interest of others by ignoring the vital issues.
4. Colloborating (Cooperative). It is the situation where individuals attempt to satisfy themselves as well as others concern.
5. Compromising (cooperative). This situation demands to seek partial satisfaction of the concerns of both

parties through exchange and sacrifice.

Conflict Handling Styles : Afzalur Rahim has come out five different conflict handling styles. They are integrating, obliging, dominating, avoiding and compromising. It must be pointed out that each has its strengths and limitations as such there is no single best style. Each is subject to situations restraints.

Concern for others
Obliging

Integrating

Compromising

Dominating

Avoiding

Integrating (Problem Solving) :

Integrating style is appropriate for complex issues and is in appropriate for resolving conflicts. Its basic strength is the impact on the underlying problem which lasts longer. Its main weakness is that it is time consuming.

Obliging (Smoothing) : It may be an appropriate conflict handling strategy but it is inappropriate for worsening problems. Its weakness is that it fails to meet the underlying problem. This style suppresses differences while stresses commonalities.

Dominating (Forcing): It is appropriate when the issue is petty, or a dead line is near. It is inappropriate in a participative situation. The main concern is speed. The weakness is that it invites resentment. It encourages "I win you lose" tactics. High concern for self and low concern for others.

Avoiding : It is appropriate for trifle issues. This static may involve passive

withdrawal from the problem. It is in appropriate for worsening problems. Its main strength that it is a natural reaction to difficult issues. Side stepping the real problem is its weakness.

Compromising : Each party is required to give up something of value. It is appropriate when parties possess equal power. It is inappropriate when there is failure to meet dead lines. Its weakness is that it can ignore creative action.

Confrontation / Competing : If the above strategies do not work out, the parties are left to confrontation to settle the conflict themselves. Each party applies its strength against the other and tries to gain personal benefit regardless of the impact on the other party to the conflict. This cannot be an ideal strategy to resolve conflict.

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