

CONFLICT

Conflict is an inherent part of functioning of any group of persons or organization. Conflicts have positive or negative effects on the organization. Conflict management has, therefore, become a more important job of a manager in modern times.

Definitions of Conflict

1. **John W. Newstorm and Keith Davis:**"Conflict is any situation in which two or more parties feel themselves in opposition.
2. **Stephen P. Robbins:**"Conflict is a process that begins when one party perceives that another party has negatively affected or is about to negatively affect something that the first party cares about."

Characteristics of Conflict:From the analysis of the above definitions certain characteristics of conflict maybe derived as follows

1. Conflicts arise at different levels - individual, group and organization
2. Conflicts are caused by disagreement between the persons/groups over the ways of attainment of goals, sharing of resources and the roles to be played.
3. Conflicts have positive and negative effects.
4. Conflict management includes both conflict resolving and stimulating techniques.

Traditional and Modern Approaches to Conflict

Approach to conflict has changed over a period of time. This approach may be classified into-Traditional approach and Modern approach.

A)Traditional Approach

- 1 The traditional approach to conflict is that all conflict is bad and it must be avoided.
2. It is harmful to the organization.
- 3 The conflict was viewed negatively and was used synonymously with terms like violence, destruction and irrationality. The traditional approach prevailed during the 1930's and 1940's and was in consistent with the attitudes and views about group behavior prevailing then

4.It was regarded that poor communication, lack of openness, distrust between people and failure of managers to respond to the needs and aspirations of their employees caused conflict in the organization.

5.The managers should look at the behaviour of trouble makers, find out the cause of the conflict and correct them to improve the group and organizational performance.

B) Modern Approach

The modern approach to conflict is that conflict is natural and inevitable outcome in the organization and it may not be bad. Stephen Robbins calls this approach as human relations view. This view prevailed from the late 1940's to the mid 1970's. The human relations school advocated the acceptance of conflict. They rationalized its existence and felt that conflict need not be bad and it may benefit the organization. The conflict cannot be eliminated totally.

There is a further change in the modern approach from 1970's. Stephen Robbins calls it as interactionist view. The interactionist view is based on the belief that conflict is not only positive force in a group but some conflict is absolutely necessary for a group to function effectively. The interactionist approach encourages conflict. It is required for change and innovation. It states that the managers should stimulate conflict and maintain continuously a minimum level of conflict to keep the organizations viable, self-critical and responsive to change, otherwise they will become static. i.e. transitions in conflict thought can be presented in table below

1.Traditional Approach	Conflict is bad and must be avoided.
2. Human Relation Approach	Conflict is natural and inevitable.
3. Interactionist Approach	Conflict is necessary for the effective functioning of a group.

Sources of Conflict: Conflicts in an organization arise from a number of sources.

1 .Organizational Change

Today the technology, political and social environment is changing very fastly compelling organizations to change. Global markets have created both Opportunities and threats. Under these circumstances organizational change has become indispensable. But there may be disagreement among the people in the organization as

to what change should be implemented, how it should be effected, how the resources should be distributed.This disagreement may lead to conflict.

2. Different Values: Conflicts may arise due to the different philosophy, value system and culture of people in the organization. These conflicts are difficult to resolve since they are less objective in nature.

3. Threat to Status

Status or social position in the group is very important. Status of a person is threatened; conflict arises between that person and other personwho has created a threat. The person threatened struggles to maintain his status in organization.

4. Lack of Trust

Conflict arises when the trust in others is lost. An environment of distrust, suspicion is created and people conflict with each other instead of co-operating. Every action person is looked at with suspicion.

5.Personality differences

Personality differences are another important source of conflict.No two persons are alike.Theythink,feel, look and act differently. Personality differences arise due to certain traits.some persons are emotionality stable, agreeable and co-operative. While other persons are emotionally unstable, uncooperative, reserved and careless.

6. Communication

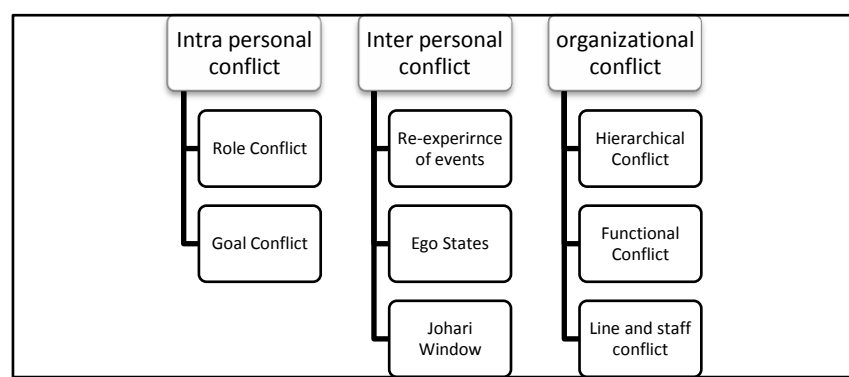
Communication can be a source of conflict in the organization. The language difficulties, misunderstanding, different meaning of words, technical language, insufficient exchange of information and noise in the communication channels are all barriers to effective communication and hence a source of conflict

Levels and Types of Conflict

Conflict occurs at different levels-individual, group and organization. It may appear in different forms. Understanding the levels and types of conflict can help a manager to manage the conflict effectively. There are three levels and types of conflict as shown in figure below.

Type of Conflict

A)Intra personal



conflict

Inter personal conflict occurs within an individual. It arises because of a threat to a person's value system, a feeling of unfair treatment in the organization. For example, a personal secretary may find speaking lies against his/her value system of speaking truth. A role ambiguity, for example, a telephone operator may be advised to be polite with customers. But at the same time her supervisor may complain that she is spending too much time with the customers. An inability to choose between two equally desirable alternatives or between two equally undesirable goals. A demand of the organization to work more than capacity.

Intrapersonal conflict can also arise when an individual feels that he is getting less for his/her contribution to the organization or when an individual sees action within an organization that he/she considers illegal or unethical. When an individual is not able to attain his/her goal, frustration will arise in the individual leading to conflict. The frustrated individual may adopt any of four defence mechanisms namely -

- Aggression - Attacking the barrier physically or symbolically.
- Withdrawal - Coming back from the barrier
- Fixation - Continuing the efforts to break the barrier and
- Compromise - Searching for a new goal

1) Goal conflict

It is more complex than conflict arising from frustration. Goal conflict occurs when the attainment of one goal excludes the possibility of attaining the other goal. There are three main forms of goal conflict namely –

1. Approach - Approach Conflict - A situation to choose between two or more positive but mutually exclusive goals. For example, a person wants to go to a political rally or to see a movie which are scheduled at the same time.

2 Approach-Avoidance Conflict - A situation where an individual is attracted to but feared by a single goal object. For example, a person may pick up the telephone of his friend with a view to ask some financial help from him, start dialing number but fearing to be insulted may put down receiver quickly.

3 Avoidance-Avoidance conflicts:A situation in which an individual is required to choose between two undesirable goals. Example-continuing job in spite of bad treatment from the boss or leaving job.

2)Roleconflict:A person wants to play several roles a but he does not get adequate time and resources to do so. Among all roles organizational role is most important .The example of an organisational role in constant conflict is that of foreman. He is generally a promottee from among workers. In those days, he has become the cadre of management.When there is a dispute between labour and management he has to face the state of dilemma.

B)Inter personal conflict:

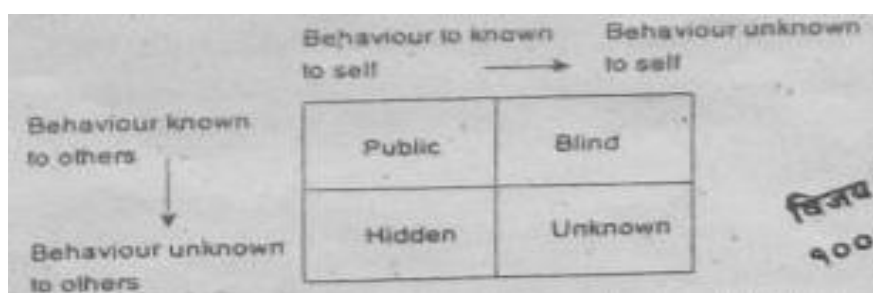
Inter-personal conflict occurs between two individuals in an organisation. It arises mainly because of difference in perception, temperaments, personalities, values systems, soci-cultural factors Inter-personal conflict can be explained with the following :

Re-experience of Events :We can re-experience all events of the past. All the events and feelings that we have ever experienced are stored within us and can be replayed so we can re-experience the events and the feelings of all our past years.

Ego States :Personality is made of ego states which are revealed in distict ways of behaving. Ego states manifest themselves in gesture tone of voice and action as if they are different people within us

JohariWindow :Before understanding Johari window it is necessary to understand what T- group (training group) is. A T-group has been defined as "an approach to human relations training which broadly speaking provides participants with an opportunity to learn more about themselves and their impact on others and in particular to learn how to function more effectively on face to face situation." The original form of a T-group re a small, leaderless, unstructured face to face grouping. The group normally numbers between 8 and 12 who may be strangers or may come from the same family or group. Faced with confusion and lack of direction, individuals act in characteristic ways. They bring to face the "hidden" and "blind" behavior of participants Thus,behavior is explained by the "Johari window".

JohariWindow :A simple framework for looking at self insight which is frequently used to help individuals in the T-group process is the Johari window which is shown below.



3)organizational conflict:

It includes all types of conflict arising within an organization. It is caused by structural defects, scarcity, of resources, authority relationship in the organization. It may be Hierarchical Conflict - A conflict which arises among different levels in the organization. For example conflict between top management and middle management.

Functional conflict: A conflict between functional departments of the organization. For example a conflict between production department and marketing department.

Line and Staff conflict - A conflict between members of line and members of staff authority.

What is meant by Values?

Values are encompassing concepts. They are at the core of personality and therefore, they are a powerful force affecting behavior. Values are so embedded that they can be inferred from people's behavior and their expressed attitudes. What may appear to be strong behavior in an employee can make sense if managers understand the value underlying that behaviour. Values have an important influence on the attitudes, perceptions; needs and motives of people at work. That is why, they are important to the study of organizational behavior.

The answers to the questions-what right or wrong and good or bad-are values. Thus, values are the basic convictions that give us a sense of right and wrong, good and bad. In this way, values form the basis for ethical behavior. All of us have a value system. Values are learned. These change as individuals grow and mature. As changes in values change individual behavior, managers have shown increasing interest in the study of values.

Values consists of opinions about what is right, fair, just, or desirable and they represent broad guides to action. Values are acquired very early in life, transmitted by parents, teachers, friends and a groups. Values generally influence attitude and behaviour. The decision making styles are also influenced by value of a person.

Value system is known as the intensity of values one possess. All of us have hierarchy of values that forms our value system. This framework may be a guiding principle when we encounter a situation of choices among the alternative courses of action. After value is learned it becomes integrated into an organized system of values in our life. This system is identified by the relative importance we assign to such values as freedom, pleasure, self-respect, honesty, obedience and equality.

B) Definitions : 1) White and Bednar : "Value is a concept of the desirable, an accepted criteria (नियम) or standard (नियमान्चा संच) of evaluation (मूल्यमापन) a person possess. (व्यक्तीमध्ये असलेल्या गुणांचे मूल्यमापन अपेक्षित, आणि स्वीकारलेले नियमाने किंवा नियमांच्या संचाने करणे म्हणजे (Value) मूल्य होय.) Such concepts and standards are relatively few and determine or guide an individual's evaluations of many objects encountered in everyday life".

Types of Values: Values are classified into different categories by different experts. Milton Rokeach has classified terminal value and instrument value through his survey. His survey is known as 'Rokeach Value Survey (RVS)'. Terminal value refers to describe end states existence. These are the goals that a person would like to achieve during his or her lifetime. It is an end state of existence.

Terminal value is once again subdivided into 'personal value' and 'social value'. Rokeach terminal values are a comfortable life, an exciting life, a sense of accomplishment, pleasure, true friendship, wisdom, freedom, happiness, etc.

The instrumental values are the preferable modes of behavior or conduct. The values are broadminded, cheerful, forgiving, helpful, loving, logical, polite, responsible, self-controlled, imaginative, clean, competent.

Milton Rokeach identified two basic types of values. They are as follows :

I) Terminal Values: Terminal values represent the desirable and states of existence, the goals of an individual would like to achieve during his/her life time. Rokeach identified 18 terminal values. They are as follows :

- 1) World Peace, 2) Happiness.
- 3) Equality, 4) Achievement,
- 5) Inner Peace, 6) Beauty in Nature,
- 7) Family Security, 8) Self-Respect
- 9) Salvation, 10) Friendship,
- 11) Mature Love, 12) Pleasure,
- 13) Freedom, 14) Wisdom.
- 15) Prosperity, 16) National Security,
- 17) Social Respect, 18) Exciting Life.

II) Instrumental values: Instrumental values represents preferable modes of behavior or means of achieving one's terminal values.

- 1) Honesty 2) Forgiving Nature,
- 3) Helpfulness 4) Self-control
- 5) independence, 6) Obedience,
- 7) Ambition, 8) Open-mindedness,
- 9) Cleanliness, 10) Affection and Love,
- 11) Politeness, 12) Rationality,
- 13) Responsibility, 14) Courage
- 15) Competence, 16) Cheerfulness
- 17) intelligence, 18) imagination.