

A Study of Causes of Conflict and Conflict Management

^{*1}Dr. Sakshi Chouhan, ²Vandana Meghwal and ³Ruchika Sharma

^{*1,2}Assistant Professor, Government Meera Girls College, Udaipur, Rajasthan, India.

³Overseas Consultant with Jamboree Education, Jaipur, Rajasthan, India.

Abstract

Conflict occurs when there is difference in views, ideology and perception of two different persons or groups. Conflict exists in every environment where people interact with each other whether it is home, office or any other place. Conflict emerges due to social disagreement, personal interests, and is a fight between two individuals, groups, or organizations resulting in stress and tensions among people. Conflict can be viewed negatively or positively. Every organization at some point of time has to deal with the conflict. Conflict is unavoidable. But to have better work environment it is too much necessary to manage conflict on time. Therefore effective conflict resolution must be there, so that the conflict does not result in personal dislikes in the organization, team break ups, and wastage of talent due to lack of commitment in the work resulting in increasing the inefficiency and ineffectiveness within the organization.

This paper aims at knowing the concept of conflict, conflict management and also finding various causes of conflicts in the organization. The study is descriptive in nature and the sample consists of 150 employees working in different organizations. Data has been collected through questionnaire containing both open and close ended questions. Further suggestions were given to manage conflict in the organization.

According to Lawrence Polsky & Antoine Gersche, "When one has the right words and phrases at their command, they can quickly resolve any disagreement-and prevent it from spreading into an uncontrollable fire".

Keywords: Conflict, conflict management, organizations performance and values & beliefs

Introduction

Human being have different goals, values, beliefs and these differences inevitably lead to conflict even if the level of conflict is very low. Conflict exists throughout all environments. This paper aims at conflict and its causes in context of employees working in different organizations. Conflict is a perpetual. Although different views are there about conflict, some may view conflict negative which must be avoided and some may viewed it positive which is necessary for growth. Conflict is not necessarily a bad thing; it can be resolved and lead to personal and professional growth.

Conflict can be defined as "conflict is a state of discord caused by the actual or perceived opposition of needs, values, and interest between people working together. In every organization people comes from different culture, background, so it is not unusual that there may arise misunderstanding which leads to conflict. Since conflict is unavoidable in any organisation, it is very necessary to recognize it and to manage it properly. But management of conflict results in wastage of time, delay in achieving goals and unnecessary wastage of energy. Organizational conflicts are unavoidable and studies indicate that about 20 percent of workers period is spent on managing conflicts (Rahim, 2000).

Causes of Conflict

1. Differing Values: The workplace consist of the individuals who are having their own values, beliefs, perspective of the world. And they believe not to

compromise with these values. So these beliefs create conflict with other workers.

- 2. Lack of Communication:** Poor communication leads to misunderstanding which further leads to conflict in the organization. Miscommunication and misunderstanding can create conflict even where there are no basic incompatibilities. In addition, people may have different perceptions as to what are the facts in a situation, and until they share information and clarify their perceptions, resolution is impossible (Fisher, 2000) [2].
- 3. Personal Problems:** If the employee has problems outside of the workplace, such as marital or parental issues, he/she may take these problems to workplace
- 4. Lack of information:** Even in the organizations conflict can be arises due to lack of information or knowledge.
- 5. Ineffective Organizational System:** Organization system problems can often induces interpersonal conflict. Poor conflict management skills in an organizations leader often leads in poor management of conflict throughout the system.
- 6. Differences in Personality:** No two people are exactly same in nature or personality. Therefore, personality clashes in the workplace cannot be ignored. One employee may have a reserved personality while another may have forward personality. Problems arise where the two persons do not respect each other's nature and personality.
- 7. Background/Gender Difference:** When two people have differences in their educational backgrounds,

personal experiences, ethnic heritage, gender and political preferences, conflict surely will arise there.

8. **Relational Skill Deficiency:** Relational skills in people help in reducing conflict before it become destructive.

Impacts of Conflict

Conflict may drop positive impacts or may negative impacts.

A) Positive Impacts

- a) **Identify Opportunity:** Conflict sometimes can be perceived as an opportunity for the employees.
- b) **Problem Solving:** Conflict may enhance a better understanding of problems which a team is facing and help a team to see something in a different light.

B) Negative Effects

- a) **Lack of New Ideas:** When conflicts are there it is very difficult to raise new ideas because they are engaged in reducing their conflict. People with conflict are unable to generate new ideas as they are engaged in resolving their conflict only.
- b) **Drop in Productivity:** When conflict takes place, employees attention is more focused on conflict resolution and not on production.
- c) **Confusion:** Conflict creates confusion between the employees and employers.
- d) **Create Frustration:** Conflict in the working environment creates frustration in the employees mind and they will suffer along with their productivity. This will reduce their confidence and motivation.
- e) Along with these negative effect conflict also increase rate absenteeism of employees. Employee turnover and mental stress.

Conflict Management

It is obvious that conflict is unavoidable. Conflict management means resolution of conflict or reduction in the degree of conflict. In conflict management parties continue the conflict but use less effective tactics and removal of the main causes of the conflict. The ultimate objective of the conflict management is to bring down the violent aspect of the conflict. Conflict management may be called the process in which negative aspects of conflict are reduced and positive aspects of conflict are enhanced. Properly managed conflict improves organizations outcomes and efficiency. There are many conflict management styles. Five conflict management styles according to Thomas, K.W., and R.H. Kilmann:

- Accommodating:** This includes cooperation at a very high degree, and work against one's own objectives, goal. This approach is useful in maintaining future relations.
- Avoiding:** This style is used when there is no chance of winning. This is when you are simply avoiding the issue. In general avoiding is not a very good long term strategy.
- Collaborating:** This can be effective for complex situation where we need to find an appropriate solution.
- Competing:** This is the "win-lose" strategy. This approach may be appropriate when time is of the essence, or when you need quick decision.
- Compromising:** This is the "lose-lose" strategy whereon party really achieves what they want to achieve. This approach requires a moderate level of cooperation. It may be appropriate for the situation where you need a temporary solution, or where both parties have equally important goals.

For an effective conflict resolution a manager needs to have skills, strategies, and any corrective actions to take at the right

time. If a person is having conflict handling skills, it helps in better professional life and helps in personal life. Seven effective conflict management skills by Raj Veradhan (2021)^[8] are communication skills, active listening, showing positive attitude and empathy, problem solving skills, applying your other skills, positive attitude and ignoring minor things.

Research Methodology

The methodology adopted for the purpose of our research was through collection of primary data from respondents who were working in different organizations. Collection of primary data was by the mode of questionnaire containing open ended and close ended questions assessing studies related to conflict among employees was developed. We considered a sample size of 150 respondents living in Jaipur and Udaipur city. It helped us to generalize the findings of the population as a whole.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

The data collected was analyzed and discussed in the following manner:

Table 1: Showing ways to deal with conflict

S. No.	Ways to deal with Conflict	No. of Respondents	No. of Respondents (%)
1	By imposing decisions	64	42.66
2	By compromising	20	13.33
3	Avoiding the conflict	41	27.33
4	If others	25	16.66
Total		150	100

Table 1 show that majority of respondents feels that their organization deals with conflict by imposing decisions 64 (42.66%), followed by avoiding the conflict 41 (27.33%). While only 20 (13.33%) respondent's feels that they compromise if conflict exists and 25 (16.66%) gave other reasons such as discussion with colleagues etc.

Table 2: Showing types of conflicts faced by Organization

S. No.	Ways to deal with Conflict	No. of Respondents	No. of Respondents (%)
1	Employee conflicts	77	51.33
2	Management and employee conflicts	41	27.33
3	Management conflicts	26	17.33
4	If others	6	4
Total		150	100

Table 2 show that majority of respondents feels that their organization face employees conflict (51.33%) followed by management and employee conflict (27.33%). While only 17.33% respondent's feels that management conflicts exists.

Table 3: Showing Consequences of conflict

S. No.	Consequences of conflict	No. of Respondents	No. of Respondents (%)
1	Decrease in productivity	72	48
2	Affect on the organization's working environment	52	34.66
3	Grouping among employees	22	14.66
4	If others	6	4
Total		150	100

Table 3 show consequences of conflict where majority of the respondents feels that conflict decreases the productivity (48%) of an employees in an organization followed by affecting organization working environment (34.66%) and also result in grouping among employees (14.66%).

Table 4: Showing behaviour/Attitude towards non agreement with the management decision

S.No.	Response	No. of Respondents	No. of Respondents (%)
1	Express your disappointment on the spot.	52	34.66
2	They discuss with your colleagues about the decision.	45	30
3	Accept the decision without any complaints.	38	25.33
4	If others	15	10
Total		150	100

Table 4 shows that majority of respondents feels that they express disappointment on the spot (34.66%) when they do not agree with the management decision. While around 30% respondents feel that they discuss things with their colleagues about the decision followed by 25.33% respondents who accept the decision without any complaints.

Table 5: Showing Response when employee gets into conflict or dispute with other person

S. No.	Response	No. of Respondents	No. of Respondents (%)
1	I will try my best to win the dispute	55	36.66
2	Give my best efforts to look for a compromise	44	29.33
3	Take the matter to the top-management	30	20
4	Wait and watch	21	14
Total		150	100

Table 5 shows that when the respondent gets into conflict or dispute with other person around 36.66% of the respondents try their best to win the dispute, followed by 29.33% who try their best efforts to look for a compromise and only 20% respondent take the matter to the top-management.

Table 6: Showing reason of Conflict

S. No.	Response	No. of Respondents	No. of Respondents (%)
1	Personal Growth	22	14.66
2	Professional growth	24	16
3	Power and Position	30	20
4	Differing Values	33	22
5	Opposing Interests	11	7.33
6	Personality Conflicts	9	6
7	Poor Communication	21	14
Total		150	100

Table 6 shows that 22% of the respondents feel that major reason for conflict is differing values of the employees, followed by power and position (20%), professional growth

(16%), personal growth (14.66%) and poor communication (14%).

Results

As discussed earlier conflict is inevitable. In every organisation conflict exists. However, this study is about conflict management and the major causes behind the conflict in an organisation. Many people think they can manage conflict and they know its impact on them. But it is not always true. In reality, conflict is complex and often misunderstood or ignored. Respondents were asked about the conflict experienced by them and the major causes resulting in conflict. On the basis of information collected through questionnaire containing open and close ended questions following are the various finding of the research undertaken.

1. Findings show that that management imposes decision if conflict exists. Very less employees feels that organization use other ways.
2. Majority of respondents feels that their organization faces employee's conflict. So management must try to focus on teamwork, develop team spirit among employees etc.
3. The major consequences of conflicts decreases the productivity of an employees in an organization followed by affecting organization working environment and also result in grouping among employees. So management must handle conflict in very well way. Counseling may prove to be a helpful in this case.
4. When the employees do not like any decision of the management they express disappointment on the spot. Very few discuss things with their colleagues about the decision
5. When the respondent gets into conflict or dispute with other person they try their best to win the dispute. Less number of people tries their best efforts to look for a compromise and take the matter to the top-management.
6. The major reason for conflict is differing values of the employees, followed by power and position, professional growth, personal growth, and poor communication. Opposing interests and personality conflict are least factors becoming reason for conflict.

Suggestions to Manage Conflict

Nothing is impossible in this world. So it is not difficult to manage conflict also. The objective of this paper was also to suggest ways to manage conflict. Avoidance or ignorance is not always a solution.

1. Individual dealing with the employees is necessary, if someone shows disagreement towards management decision. With this active listening and questioning method for knowing the basic reason for conflict. Better communication may result in good outcomes.
2. Along with this training must be given to the employees regarding recognizing the personality types so that they could better understand each other.
3. If the conflict is very big then neutral third party or expert must arbitrate the dispute, but before that internal settlement must be tried.
4. Motivation must be given to employees to solve conflict directly with each other if it is between two individuals working in the same organization.
5. Development of such plans must be done so that it satisfies everyone in the organization and does not result in negative thoughts.

6. Instead of avoiding conflict or ignoring it, solution or the root cause behind it must be searched so that it does not create problem in future or take a giant shape.

Conclusion

Conflict can be a serious problem in any organization. It comes when people come across each other. It might not bring about the failure of a firm, but it certainly can harm an organization's performance as well as lead to the loss of many good members of staff. However, as we have already discussed in the paper, all conflicts aren't bad. It has both positive side as well as a negative side. Stress is also closely related to conflict. This disagreement may arise due to differences in points of view, values, beliefs, ideology or unhealthy competition resulting in positive or negative consequences. But the management of the organization must be alert and must use ways to manage conflict as soon as it arises so that it does not result in poor organizational performance. To resolve conflict management must focus on increasing employee satisfaction along with productivity by managing interpersonal conflicts hence boosting interpersonal relationships. Thus to manage conflict successfully a favorable environment for conflict resolution is must. It is observed that organizations that carry out conflict audit and are able to manage conflict well, resulting in satisfied work force and achieving organizational as well as individual objectives (Murerwa, T. and Guantai, F., 2019) ^[7]. Hence it depends on entrepreneur or manager at the workplace that how he manages conflicts. At times when different opinions clash and members settle down at common ground, resulting in great solutions. On the other side if, the conflicts become toxic and never-ending, they affect the efficiency of the whole group in a negative way. In both ways, the role of the entrepreneur or manager is very crucial (Joan Selby, 2017) ^[4].

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