

Organizational Conflicts Are Necessary Evils: An Innate View of Indian Perspective

Dr. Rajasekhara Mouly Potluri (Corresponding Author)*, Ms. Lavanya Puttam²

Mr. Suresh Babu Pemula³, Mr. Naveen Kumar Butta⁴

*1. Professor & Head: Department of Management Studies

Nimra Institute of Science & Technology, Nimra Nagar, Jupudi, Ibrahimpatnam- 521 456, Andhra Pradesh, INDIA.

Email: prmouly@yahoo.co.in

2. Assistant Professor: Department of Management Studies

Nimra Institute of Science & Technology, Nimra Nagar, Jupudi, Ibrahimpatnam- 521 456, Andhra Pradesh, INDIA.

Email: lavanya.puttam@gmail.com

3. Assistant Professor: Department of Management Studies

Nimra Institute of Science & Technology, Nimra Nagar, Jupudi, Ibrahimpatnam-521 456, Andhra Pradesh, INDIA.

Email: pemula.suresh@yahoo.com

4. Assistant Professor: Department of Management Studies

Nimra Institute of Science & Technology, Nimra Nagar, Jupudi, Ibrahimpatnam- 521 456, Andhra Pradesh, INDIA.

Email: ramannaveenhr@gmail.com

Abstract

The core objective of this article is to be acquainted with the conflict in both optimistic and pessimistic sides of the Indian context. After meticulous review of pertinent literature, the researchers ponder over to garner the opinions of modicum number of both Indian employees and managerial cadre in an informal chat and identified majority of the Indians are reluctant to involve in conflicts both in their personal and professional life. But in reality majority of the Indians are directly or indirectly culpable for creating conflicts, shows both positive and negative impact on their organizations. The general view of the managerial cadre is also quite contradictory to the outlook of the employees. But, unfortunately conflicts shows a pernicious impact on modern work culture because of differences like religion, region, and gender, personality clashes, along with professional ego and skill differences.

Keywords: Conflicts; individual and group conflicts; organizational conflicts; Interactionsit perspective

1. INTRODUCTION

Conflict is widespread to healthy, sprouting societies in every part of the globe. All interpersonal to international social systems experience conflict on a regular basis. It is almost a part and parcel in every human being's both personal and professional life. Hale and hearty organizational climate would be replicated in complete synchronization in working relationships which in turn leads to constancy and a determined commitment to the goals and objectives of the organization. This outlook of the organizations propels them into a confident note in achieving their objectives. In this process, organizations are sometimes encourages the development of conflicts to develop the meaningful, and amicable solution to the conflicting issues and majority of the times companies are involving to develop strategies to conflict management. Drucker (1989) makes the following point: "Any business enterprise must build a true team and weld individual efforts into a common effort. Each member of the enterprise contributes something different, but they must all contribute towards a common goal. Their efforts must all pull in the same direction, and their contributions must fit together to produce a whole—without gaps, without friction, without unnecessary duplication of effort. The manager must know and understand what the business goals demand of him in terms of performance and his superior must know what contribution to demand and expect of him –and must judge him accordingly. If these requirements are not met, managers are misdirected and then their efforts are obviously wasted. Instead of teamwork, there is friction, frustration and conflict". This is quite common phenomenon in developing countries in general and specifically in India. The researchers identified the myriad number of abortive incidents in Indian corporate world which probes them to select the topic of this interest.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Conflict has extensive emphasis on the attitude, performance and contentment of employees. A manager time and again faces his most scratchy events when he has to transact with conflicts or disparities among people or groups of people in the organization. Occurrence of conflicts makes the job more difficult in so many ways.

Moreover, it is imperative that the manager ought to understand the concept of conflict totally and put his efforts to handle it effectively with great degree of exactitude. Conflict arises when individuals are not in a position to select the best alternative among the alternatives. Conflict is a vibrant process as it portends a series of events. Every conflict is made up of a series of interactive conflicting episodes. Conflict must be perceived by the parties in their own interest. If no one is aware of a conflict, then it is generally agreed that no conflict exists. Conventionally, organization can be seen as collective and harmonious set-up. Conflict can be viewed as a dysfunctional outcome and explained through poor communications, personality clashes or the work of agitators. Generally, conflict is a part of class struggle. The blueprint of the organization structure, management arrangement and selection of technology all form part of the struggle for power and control within the organization. Greater concentration should be given to relations between the formal and informal facets of the organization, the study of conflict between the needs of the individual and those of the organization and between workers and management (Mullins, 2008).

Conflict is generally regarded as disagreement regarding interests or ideas (Esquivel and Kleiner, 1997). In addition organisational conflict is regarded as the discord that occurs when the goals, interests or values of different individuals or groups are incompatible with those of individuals or groups block or frustrate each others in an attempt to achieve their objectives. Conflict are inevitable part of organisational life since the goals of different stakeholders such as managers and staff are often incompatible (Jones *et al.*, 2000). In addition, Loomis and Loomis (1965) argue that conflict is an ever-present process in human relations. That is why various organisations have changed their approaches to enable them to manage their organisations effectively to avoid conflicts at all costs. Conflict is a fact of life in any organisations as longer as people compete for jobs, resources, power, recognition and security. In addition, dealing with conflicts is a great challenge to management (Adomi and Anie, 2005). Conflicts commonly arise when employees interact in organisations and compete for scarce resources. Employees in various organisations are organized into manageable groups in order to achieve common goal, therefore, the probability of conflicts to arise is very high. Nowadays, most serious conflicts make headlines in the newspapers, which might affect the public image of the company. Conflicts have both negative and positive outcomes to the individual employees and the organization at large. There is no one source of conflicts which occurs in organisations at all levels of management (Barker *et al.*, 1987). In social life, conflicts do occur but they are managed by family members, friends and relatives. The same case applies to organisations, when conflicts arise; it needs to be resolved by management for the sake of the organisational growth, survival and enhance performance. However, conflicts are rarely resolved easily, to a certain extend most conflicts are managed, as individuals work out differences (Barker *et al.*, 1987). Conflict can occur within groups (intra-group conflict) or among groups (inter-group conflict). Relationship conflicts reflect disagreements and incompatibilities among group members about personal issues that are not task related, such as social event's gossip, and world news (Barling and Cooper, 2008).

Conflicts in the workplace can occur among the individuals, groups, departments and in between unions and management. Wherever, conflicts arises in any form those severely hamper the relations among individuals and sometimes the very existence of organization itself is in question mark. There are subtler forms of conflict involving rivalries, jealousies, personality clashes, role definitions and struggles for power and favour (Johnson, 1976). According to Boston University FSAO, "Causes for workplace conflict can be personality or style differences and personal problems such as substance abuse, childcare issues, and family problems. Organizational factors such as leadership, management, budget, and disagreement about core values can also contribute." In any organizations, there are many causes of conflicts; however conflicts within an individual usually arise when a person is uncertain about what task is expected to do, if not clearly defined by the supervisor or the person in-charge. Furthermore, with tasks of individuals working as groups or not clearly defined by the management they will lead to more conflicts. Conflict between individuals may result from role-related pressures. Conflicts could arise between individuals and groups if the goals are not specified for individuals within a group (Duke, 1999). Additionally, the following are other sources of conflicts within an organization namely; sharing of resources especially manpower, money materials, equipment and space required among departments. The management might blame all units involved at each process which might lead to a conflict. Incompatible personalities, which are psychological, might affect the employees not to get along with each other and this difficulty might lead to conflicts, which result from formal interactions with other employees (Robbins, 1987). Ongori (2009) stated conflicts are basically three types. These are task, interpersonal and procedural conflicts. Disagreement among the group members about the substance of the discussion is called task conflict whereas interpersonal conflicts has arisen because of the personality clash among the group members in the form of antagonistic remarks that mostly relate to the personal characteristics. Procedural conflict exists when group members disagree about the procedures to be followed in accomplishing the group goal.

Conflicts provide numerous benefits to the organization chiefly in achieving its mission by frequently review the norms and policies based on the circumstances. Conflicts lead to novelty and transform. Conflict is

disagreements, due to tension and uneven condition between two or more mutually dependent parties. The key dysfunctional consequences of divergence are deferred product launch because one group impedes another group's product release; circumvent flow of information across divisions; lower morale and higher turnover of key employees. Personnel quite repeatedly detached from their duty by inner feud and, in some cases, connect in dysfunctional behaviors such as preservation of precious ken and other resources. Continuous conflict simultaneously increases stress, turnover, weaken organizational commitment and job satisfaction. At the intergroup level, conflict with people outside the team may cause the team to become more insular-increasing their cohesiveness while distancing themselves from outsiders who are critical of the team's past decisions (Rempel and Fisher, 1997) Conflict also have a downbeat impact on humans with emotional damage: anxiety, annoyance, frustration and anger, decreased communication and acceleration of conflicts unless resolute appropriately in a timely manner

2.1 Organizational Conflicts Are Necessary Evils

Not all conflicts are bad and not all conflicts are good, according to Hocker and Wilmot, (1995). Even though, general tendency of people towards conflict is of negative side but many positive reflections confidently noticed by the modern organizations like enhancing the quality in decision making; develop group cohesiveness with constructive discussions. Conflicts which hold up the goals of the group and percolate its performance are known as functional conflicts. From another point of view, there are conflicts that impede group performance; these are destructive form of conflict. Decisive evaluation of the specified statement calls for full-grown debate about the optimistic and pessimistic effect of the conflict. The traditional view of conflict is that it is bad for organizations. Conflicts are time and again apparent as wearisome and aberrant, representing a form of unusual behavior that should be proscribed and changed. Conflict is not basically an awful thing. Though, conflict can be seen as a 'constructive' force and in certain conditions, it can be welcomed or even buoyant. It can be seen as a prop up to incremental perfection in organizational design, performance and to the decision-making process. Conflict acts like a means for internal and external transformation. Precisely acknowledged and handled, it can facilitate to restrain the critical influences of the win-lose circumstances. From a survey of practicing managers who reported that they spend approximately 20 percent of their time dealing with conflict situations, Schmidt (1974) stated a plethora of both positive and negative consequential conflict. Positive effects like improved ideas created; people enforced to explore for new approaches; elongated standing problems brought to the surface and resolved; elucidation of individual views; encouragement of curiosity and inventiveness; a prospect for people to check their competence. He also reiterated some negative outcomes like some people felt crushed and degraded; the detachment between people augmented; a climate of suspicion and disbelief developed; individuals and groups concentrated on their own narrow interests; resistance developed rather than teamwork; an increase in employee turnover. Along with the above said positive and negative outcomes of the organizational conflict, the following list has given more comprehensive analysis and supports the statement given for the study.

Conflict when articulated can lucid the appearance and reduce the anxiety which might otherwise remain concealed. Oppression of pressure can lead to ingenious distortion of truth, sense of annoyance and stress, acute psychological exaggerations and influenced views resulting in dread and mistrust. When members express themselves, they will become satisfied. This also leads to lessening of anxiety among the members involved. When a group is faced with a conflict, the members exhibit critical thoughts in recognize different option. In dearth of conflict, they might not have been inventive or even might have been lethargic. The conflicts may provoke challenge to such outlooks, beliefs, regulations, guidelines, aspirations and plans which would require a decisive analysis in order to justify these as they are or make such changes that may be required. Conflicts among work groups bring proximity and cohesion in the group members. It evolves sense of loyalty and identity to compete with external people. This enhances the degree of group understanding which can be exploited by the management for the achievement of organizational goals in an efficient manner. As understanding augments among the members, differences were ignored. Conflicts encourage opposition and hence it results in accelerated endeavors. In some peculiar situations, people who have knacks like understanding the situation, clear knowledge about the root cause for the problem, analytical skills, passion towards his objective etc., can benefits from the conflict and zooming ahead progressively with a great surge of confidence. Such conflict and contest, thus, probes to high level of endeavor and output. Conflicts check the aptitude and potentialities of the people. It generates challenges from them for which they have to be energetic and inventive. If they are enabling to conquer the challenge, it will probe to quest for alternatives to accessible pattern which directs to organizational change and development. Often, conflict encourages change among the people. When a conflict arises, it is an augury in identifying the weaknesses of the system. Once the management comes to know about the flaws, it can always take the steps to eliminate them. Conflict creates awareness of what problems exist, who is involved and how to solve the problem. Taking a sign from this, management can take the required action. When difference of opinion has arisen persons state their divergent views and viewpoints, high quality decisions result. The people share their information and check each other's reasoning to evolve novel decisions. Conflict

adds to the fun of working with others when not taken critically.

In case of intra-individual and inter-individual conflicts predominantly, some energetic staff may depart from the organization, if they fail to resolve the conflict in their favor. In this situation, organization will be the victim in the long run due to the loss of key staff. Occasionally, divergence can source high level of nervousness among the persons and groups and a period may approach when it becomes tricky for the administration to resolve the conflicts. This will result in fretfulness, irritation, ambiguity and enmity among the people. Conflict will result in unhappiness to the losing party, who will wait for an opportunity to reconcile the score with the winning party. This complete scuffle will effect in less awareness on the job and as a result, the efficiency will suffer. Conflicts time and again generate an environment of disbelief and mistrust between members of the group in the organization. The degree of understanding will be less as the discords will be more. The concerned people will have pessimistic stance towards each other and try to circumvent interaction with each other. Conflicts certainly divert the attention of members of the organization from organizational goals. They squander their time and energy in finding ways and strategies to come out as winners in the conflict. Individual success becomes more significant than the organizational goals. Conflicts are not at all cost-centers for individuals but majority of the times these produce lucrative benefits to them. But the conflicts may attenuate the organization as a whole; if the management is unable to handle them appropriately. If the management attempts to restrain conflicts, they acquire enormous proportions in the later stages. Unresolved conflicts tends to grow into bigger conflicts, the more it grows, the greater the chance of collecting more problems (Knippen and Green, 1999). Some of these problems, which might arise due to conflict, are lack of cooperation, poor communication, wasted and contagious conflict. And if the management does not intervene in the earlier stages, redundant plights may be encouraged at the later stages. It is a cost to the organization, because resignations of personnel deteriorate the organization, feeling of suspect among members have pessimistic impact on efficiency and so on.

The present view appears to be familiar with that conflict can be construed more broadly than in the conventional perspective. For instance, Townsend (1985) sees conflict as a sign of a healthy organization – up to a point: “A good manager doesn’t try to eliminate conflict; he tries to keep it from wasting the energies of his people... If you’re the boss and your people fight you openly when they think you’re wrong—that’s healthy. If your people fight each other openly in your presence for what they believe in – that’s healthy. But keep all the conflict eyeball to eyeball.” In this modern outlook, managers’ should boost the conflict between him and his employees and at the same time between employees and follow closely to find out the best from the difference of opinion in the conflict management process. A more recent vision on conflict is the **interactionist perspective**, which believes that conflict is a positive force and necessary for effective performance. This approach promotes a modicum level of conflict within the group in order to encourage self-criticism, change and innovation, and to help prevent apathy or too great a tolerance of harmony and the status quo (Robbins, 1988). Conflict, per se is not necessarily good or bad, but an unavoidable feature of organizational life and should be judged in terms of its effects on performance. Even if organizations have taken meticulous care to try and mitigate conflict, it will still persist. Conflict will continue to emerge despite attempts by management to repress it.

3. PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

The Indian corporate sector which has identified severe affect on their performance in all angles because of conflicts arises in their organizations. The impact of conflicts is very noteworthy in public sector companies in the country whereas private sector organizations are somewhat better because of stringent conflict resolution strategies by the think-tank of their concerns. Particularly reasons like autocratic leadership, over span of control, wrong delegation, professional ego, distortions in communication, and anomalies in different financial and non-financial motivational methods, political interference severely hampers the productivity, efficiency and efficacy of the organization. Despite of these reasons, most of the organizations which are under the administration of successful Westside managers intentionally evolve conflicts with a positive sign by expecting a meaningful, productive and lucrative advantage with the principle more brains are always better than one. The advent of conflicts among the groups in the organization with a positive note has given advantages like evolving group culture among employees, sharing and accepting others opinions, skill improvement among employees at the bottom level and at the macro level organizations can enjoy benefits like timely completion of allotted work with an accurate delivery, production with more economies, strong base of satisfied customers, gaining competitive advantage from different angles, which in turn leads to an expected level of success in the corporate arena.

4. CONCLUSION

Being man an endothermic animal, conflicts are quite common either in the organization or in the domestic life. Conflicts are like virus when organizations allow those to grow bigger obviously impedes organizational bare sustenance. This is high time all the managerial and employee communities both in public and private sectors introspect themselves to curb conflicts which have negative impact on the organizations simultaneously promote conflicts with positive nod after careful evaluation of different conflicts with their merit. In this juncture, the top

management of the organizations has to develop confidence in identifying exact nature of different conflicts and the root causes behind those and particularly the intentions of people behind those conflicts. Conflict, a multi-dimensional construct directs the organizations future for its better development in the aspects of productivity, profiteering and image among the diverse stakeholder of the company.

REFERENCES

- Adomi, E. E. & Anie, S. O., (2005), "Conflict Management in Nigerian University Libraries, *J. Library Manage*", 27: 520-530.
- Barker, L. L., Kathy, J. W., Watson, K. W. and Kibler, R.J., (1987), "Groups in Process: An Introduction to Small Group Communication", 3rd Edn., Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs, NJ.
- Barling, Julian and Cooper, Cary (2008), "The SAGE Handbook of Organizational Behavior", SAGE Publications Ltd. P. 776.
- Drucker, P. F. (1989), "The Practice of Management", Heinemann Professional, p. 119.
- Duke, C(1999), "Organizational Conflicts Affecting Technology Commercialization from Non-Profit Laboratories", *Journal of Product, Brand Management*, 4 (5), p. 15.
- Esquivel, M. A. and B. H. Kleiner, (1997), "The Importance of Conflict in Work Team Effectiveness", *Team Performance Manage.*, 3: 89-96.
- Faculty and Staff Assistance, (2012), "Workplace Conflict", Boston University FSAO, Retrieved 1st December, 2012.
- Hocker, J. L and W. W. Wilmot, (1995). *Interpersonal Conflict*. 4th Edition; The Mc Graw-Hill Companies Inc; USA.
- Johnson, Richard Arvid (1976), "Management, Systems, and Society: An Introduction", Pacific Palisades, Calif.: Goodyear Pub. Co., pp. 142-148.
- Jones, G. R., Gorge, J. M. and Hill, C. W. L.(2000), "Contemporary Management", Mc Graw-Hill, Boston, MA.
- Knippen, J. T. and Green, T. B. (1999), "Handling Conflicts", *Journal of Workplace Learning*, 11: 27-32.
- Loomis, C. P. and Loomis, Z. K., (1965), "Modern Social Theories", Van Nodtrand Company, Inc., Princeton.
- Mullins, L. J. (2008), "Essentials of Organizational Behavior", Prentice Hall, London, UK, p. 13.
- Ongori, Henry, (2009), "Organizational Conflict and Its Effects on Organizational performance", *Research Journal of Business Management*, 3 (16), p. 24.
- Rempel, R. and Fisher, R. J. (1997), "Perceived Threat, Cohesion, and Group Problem Solving in Intergroup Conflict", *International Journal of Conflict Management*, no.8, pp. 216-34.
- Robbins, S. P. (1988), "Organizational Behavior": Concepts, Controversies, Applications, Eighth Edition, Prentice Hall.
- Salaman, G. (1981), "Class and Corporation", Fontana.
- Robbins, S. P. (1987), "Organization Theory": Structure, Design and Application, 2nd Edn. Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, NJ.
- Schmidt, W. H. (1974), "Conflict: A Powerful Process for (Good or Bad) Change Management" *Review*, 63, December, 1974, pp. 4-10.
- Townsend, R.(1985), "Further Up the Organization", Coronet Books, p. 39.