

# The Interpersonal Conflicts and its impact on the Employees' Morale in the HEIs: A correlative study

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## Abstract

The interpersonal conflicts are significant enough to reshape rather redefine the course of academic and administrative pursuits of the higher educational institutions. In every sphere of life, an interpersonal conflict is an antithesis to the phenomenon of co-existence. It cast a highly negative impact upon the institutional standards and eventually hampers the employees' credibility in all respects. Eventually, the graph of the employees' morale dips to its minima which are an alarming phenomenon to be analyzed and impeded. The academic institutions, as a seat knowledge and learning cannot afford to sustain the overdose of interpersonal conflict as these conflicts lessen the level of efficiency and output as a whole. The need arises to categorically elaborate, analyze and comprehensively devise the most appropriate approaches to resolve these disputes prevailing within the institutional domains.

**Keywords:** Interpersonal conflict, Employees' morale and Institutional performance

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The history of academic institutions reveals that the conflicts among the employees have remained the major issue to be resolved by the concerned authorities. It is his/her core responsibility to comprehend and evolve a suitable formula which resolves the interpersonal conflicts persisting in their institutions. The phenomenon of interpersonal conflict is not new rather it prevails since the inception of this world (Shiv & Fedorikhin, 1999). Among the employees, there are several disparities regarding postings, transfers, promotions, bonuses, rewards, increments and other related perks and privileges. At the professional level, the rivalries, do exists which can cost the institution in the kind of academic, social and financial loss. A judicious handling on the part of the concerned authorities can minimize the level of interpersonal conflicts among the employees (Fisher, 2000). In the society, the academic institutions are the only places where the matters are pursued scholarly. In this regard, to resolve the interpersonal conflict, the solution must be evolved in a thoughtful manner and with utmost determination. The literature revealed that the interpersonal conflict severely affects the morale of the employees and the credibility of the concerned institution (Chuang & Ning, 2003).

The education sector is the main source of qualified human resources those which are the backbone of national economy. To heighten and strengthen the teacher's morale is the key responsibility of the institutional high ups. The faculty members standing on the high moral grounds are instrumental in the institutional success ultimately (Tjosvold, 2008). They must be considered an asset for the concerned institution. In Pakistan, a developing country, the society is marked with a chain of conflict mainly racial, linguistic, ethnic, political, regional and professional. All these are casting negative impact upon the overall organizational dynamics. In the same line, among others, the higher educational institutions stand prominent where the interpersonal conflicts are weakening the roots of the future tree of development (Hotepo, Asokere, Azeez & Ajemunigbohun, 2010). The mental and physical appearances of the individuals are not similar; in the same line there is no similarity in their behavior and attitude to gauge their personalities and priorities and all these culminates at the interpersonal conflicts. In this context, some collective measures must be evolved, framed and implemented to cure the malaise of interpersonal conflicts among the functionaries of the higher educational institutions (Elmagri & Eaton, 2011). In this regard, the problem of the interpersonal conflicts and morale of the faculty members should be regularly observed to enhance the teacher's performance and the standards of the institution as well.

## 2. INTERPERSONAL CONFLICT

The interpersonal conflict is a multi-faceted phenomenon and to handle this there must be a well-structured and long term planned to be implemented by a strong vision and authority. The said plan should be comprised of the modern tools and techniques, modes to transfer and assign responsibilities and tasks. To remove the ambiguities, it is obligatory on the part of the high ups, to re-allocate duties, non-routine decision-making and expectations to perform leads to conflict and complexity (Rahim, 2001). The re-setting of priorities, sharing of available resource and other institutional back up are necessary factors which can help in undoing the existing conflicts. Last but not the least, at the institutional level, such discipline should be established which can carry the pursuits in a conflict free environment. In some cases, it is noted that institutional reforms do not cater as the nature of the conflict is not related (Jehn & Bendersky, 2003). In this scenario, it is the leadership, which comes forward to

bridge the gap and can build a strong bond without any prior plan or strategy. It can be accomplished through clever and bold tactics, defining decisional premises, specifying boundaries, allocating adequate resources and acting like intermediary. In the context of modern management theory, the leadership does not only help in lessening the level of conflicts rather the measures thus introduced must be sustained (Tjosvold, 2008).

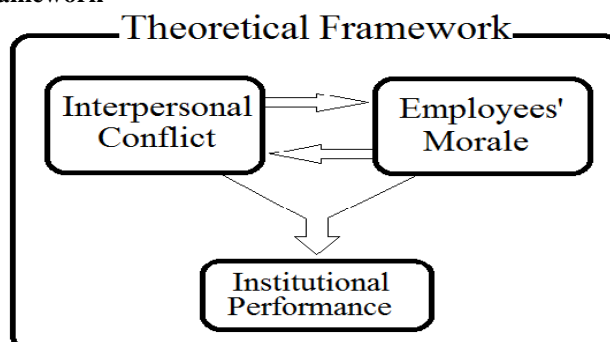
To achieve the tasks of the institution, especially the academic institution, it is very important to comprehend and analyze the actual form and nature of the prevailing conflict. In this way, the said conflict will be resolved and can be settled down successfully and amicably to the best benefits of the institution (Hotepo et al., 2010). On the part of the authorities, to solve and settle the conflict, an ultimate authority, a strong and clear vision, high level of commitment, power to decide and last but not the least the professional approach are the prominent factors those which matter a lot (Ilies, Johnson, Judge & Keeney, 2011). Here, it is pertinent to state that the diversity in the nature, approach and thinking of the individual help substantially in resolving the interpersonal conflicts. The positive aspect of the conflict is that the difference of opinion always contributes in making such decisions which help to enhance both efficiency and output of the employees (Williams, 2011). In all respects, the overall outlook and profile is reshaped by the virtue of interpersonal conflict rather the entire institution is over-shadowed by the same.

### 3. THE MORALE

The nature and the dynamics of the ensuing conflicts are diverse those which vary according to the strength and structure of the institution. There is no definite frequency and time period for the occurrence of these conflicts rather they are random and continuous in their rate of birth and maturity. This phenomenon has certain long lasting effects on the employees' moral level which acts as a catalyst towards their efficiency and commitment. The reciprocal harmony and working relationship among the employees is one of the prime indicators which are duly supported by their high morale (Colledge, 1995). According to some social scientists, the conflicts may enhance the productivity and undoing them can result in the low output. This theory put emphasis upon the motivation and thrill which results in inter-employees competition at the professional level. The employee must consider himself/herself morally bound to dedicate his/her services for the greater benefits of the institution (Hunter, 1997). The morale is a format comprised of his/her mental and emotional attitude because it is the feelings of an employee about his/her job and colleagues in association to its significance with the institutions. For this purpose, his/her relationship with the colleagues and the subordinates should be based upon certain very strong bonds leading to a comprehensive professional approach.

Every human-being possesses certain level of moral values by which he/she is known in the society. His/her attitude, behavior and especially the pursuance of professional matters are the replica of the set of moralities he/she possesses. Morale is a multi-dimensional phenomenon which is related to each and every individual in the institution. The person who is satisfied with his/her job, feel himself/herself morally elevated and all this can better be viewed in the context of his/her personal attributes, the available literature revealed (Jehn & Bendersky, 2003). There is a negative impact of poor morale notably in those employees who are visible burnt-out, weary, exhausted, fatigued and especially who do not get positive response from their parent institution regarding their services. In most cases, such employees despite of their strong efforts fail to bring about any substantial change in the institutional working format for the better results. On the part of the institutional high ups, regular feedbacks, consistence appreciations, reposing utmost trust, tendering support in the kind of rewards and assigning lucrative and high profile tasks can add to the ethical values of an employees (Tjosvold, 2008). In an academic institution, the morale of the teacher is closely bracketed with his/her qualifications, competency, experience, social status, admiration at the institutional level and by his/her colleagues and recognition of his/her services.

**Figure 1.1 Theoretical Framework**



#### 4. DISCUSSIONS

The conflict is the disagreement among the individuals on the basis of their interests. It may or may not be from one's inside or between two individuals or within the institution and has negative meaning. "The managers do not like the conflicts and people involved in conflicts are considered to be having the personalities with some defects and are titled as troublemakers or bad apples" (Fisher, 2000). This space may in the form of physical, political, psychological or an arena based on the room for one individual. The conflict can be classified as good or bad based on the way it is managed and whether it contribute to the institution or add some cost to the institution. "The competitive environment of the institution for rewards and promotion leads to fight for the limited resources of the institution and this leads to; usage of tactics of coercion, deception or threat; attempts made for creating power distance among individuals; rise of suspicious or hostile attitude" (Rahim, 2001).

The interpersonal conflict rises among individuals can be managed by applying different planned tactics. There are three facets of interpersonal conflict, like disagreement, interference and negative emotions. "The institutions may or may not be getting benefits from interpersonal conflicts but these conflicts are negatively impacting the performance of the employees, nevertheless the way conflict is being managed by institution" (Chuang & Ning, 2003). Antecedents of interpersonal conflicts are: individual characteristics, team characteristics, project characteristics and institutional characteristics. "The individual characteristics comprises of personality, demographics, education and experience, institutional status, institutional role and department and needs, interests and goals". The team characteristics consist of its size, heterogeneity, leadership, team processes including participation, influence and communication, history including previous conflicts, management styles, tactics and outcomes. The project characteristics mean the combination of system characteristics and importance, resources, time pressures and constraints, success criteria and support from the top management (Tjosvold, 2008). The institutional characteristics as an antecedent of interpersonal conflict have two dimensions; institutional culture and institutional climate.

The related literature proposed the different styles to manage and resolve the interpersonal conflicts namely, the avoiding, collaborating, competing, accommodating and sharing. Achieving one's own goals while ignoring the goals of others originate from the competing (Hotepo et al., 2010). The indifference to the wants and needs of both the revelries refers to avoiding. The sharing denotes to the attitude in which state of cooperating arises. The accommodative style means giving significance to the needs of others over own needs (Elmagri & Eaton, 2011). Finally, is the collaborative approach which is based on mutual understanding and reaching a point of common interest and win-win type of situation comes as a result of such type of strategy. "The strategy to resolve conflict depends upon the situation and the rationality for existence of different types of conflict resolution approaches is to create the win-win situation" (Williams, 2011). The literature revealed that applying the same strategy to all situations with varying nature, kind and level of conflict is not the appropriate way to manage the conflict.

#### 5. CONCLUSION

To resolve the interpersonal conflicts, the ultimate responsibility falls upon on the shoulders of the institutional high ups. The timely, effective and sustainable resolution of the conflicts can be deemed as a mega success not only for the high ups rather it is instrumental for the socio-economic and academic credibility of the institution. In the contemporary atmosphere, the interpersonal conflicts have become multi-dimensional in their outlook and impact. Therefore, the planning and tactics should be redefined to handle this issue with certain best results. In this context, the classical theories have lost both their computability and utility because they have failed to provide appropriate solution to the issue under consideration. Now, the leadership faces a great challenge of building a level of confidence among their employees to uplift their morale lost during the course. In fact, the prevailing situation marked with the interpersonal conflict demands certain creative rather innovative steps by the leadership to cope with utmost authority and determination. Consequently, the efficiency of the employee and ultimate output level will attain its best. On the other hand, the ill planning, lack of motivation and short sightedness of the leadership further aggravate the hostile situation.

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