Conflict Management

Prepared by:

Fatima Salam

Research Student, Department of Management Sciences, The Islamia University of Bahwalpur.

Email: fatimasalaam@gmail.com
When people think of the word conflict, they often think of wars or violence. However, conflict exists at all levels of society in all sorts of situations. It is easy to forget that we experience conflict every day of our lives.

Conflict Defined

- A disagreement of ideas or interests. Conflict happens when two or more people or groups have, or think they have, incompatible goals.
Conflict Management

- It is the practice of identifying and handling conflict in a sensible, fair, and efficient manner.
Conflict

- Conflict is a fact of life. God made each of us in his own image, but he also made us unique.

- Therefore some of our views and opinions will differ from those of others. Conflict often occurs because of a lack of respect for one another’s needs and views.
Transitions in Conflict Thought

Traditional View of Conflict

The belief that all conflict is harmful and must be avoided.

Causes:

- Poor communication
- Lack of openness
- Failure to respond to employee needs
Transitions in Conflict Thought (cont’d)

Human Relations View of Conflict

The belief that conflict is a natural and inevitable outcome in any group.

Interactionist View of Conflict

The belief that conflict is not only a positive force in a group but that it is absolutely necessary for a group to perform effectively.
Misunderstanding vs. Conflict

- In a misunderstanding, differing parties simply do not understand each other or the situation, often due to the lack of clear communication.
- Conflict occurs when there is clear understanding of diverting ideas.
- Conflicts occur because people care and feel that their ideas, values, goals, successes and relationships may be threatened.
Types of Conflict

1. No conflict
   Any peaceful community is likely to face conflict sometimes, although communities in this category are good at resolving conflict before it develops.

2. Surface conflict
   This has shallow or no roots. It may be due to misunderstanding of goals, which can be addressed by improved communication and the conscious effort of opposing groups to understand each other’s needs and opinions.

3. Latent conflict
   This is conflict below the surface. It might need to be brought out into the open before it can be effectively addressed.

4. Open conflict
   This conflict is very visible and has deep roots, sometimes over several generations. Both the causes and the affects need to be addressed.
Types of Conflict

Communities experiencing surface or Latent conflict are those where

- The disagreement can quickly turn into open conflict.

- Open conflict can cause more physical, social, psychological and environmental damage than the other types. It affects people who are not involved in the conflict as well as those who are.
CAUSES OF CONFLICT
Causes of Conflict

- Conflict of aims - different goals
- Conflict of ideas - different interpretations
- Conflict of attitudes - different opinions
- Conflict of behavior - different behaviors are unacceptable
- Issues of disagreement in recent at large-scale include territory, language, religion, natural resources, ethnicity or race, migration and political power. Sometimes there is more than one issue of disagreement.
When differences develop into tensions there are unlikely to be any shortcuts to an agreement. Once the crisis point is reached, there are no quick solutions.

1. Pre-conflict
   - **Differences**: Discussions and differences can be healthy and productive if met with tolerance.
   - **Tensions**: Views become fixed and people begin to criticise their opponents and view them as the enemy. Differences between the groups get worse. The groups become more divided.

2. Confrontation
   - **Disputes**: Neither side will admit that they have made mistakes. They become determined. More extreme positions are taken. Threats are made but not carried out. Supporters may engage in demonstrations or other confrontational behaviour.

3. Crisis
   - **Peak of conflict**: With open hostility and/or violence. Communication between sides often stops.
   - **Hostilities**: People become convinced that their views are right. Opponents are mocked, scorned and isolated. Some threats are carried out.
   - **Violence**: ‘No way back’. ‘They must lose’. Force is used, perhaps physical violence.
**Outcome**

Force may run its course until one party ‘wins’, another surrenders, a cease-fire is agreed, or all are exhausted. Outsiders may intervene with force to bring violence to a halt.
9 Everyone agrees
They may agree to keep different views but always accept the views of others. It may be helpful to have a written and signed agreement for future reference.

8 Finding solutions
An approach is found that everyone agrees on, whether this uses the law, customary methods or partnership. Solutions are agreed and acted upon.

7 Mutual understanding
People come to understand views of others and respect them. The conflict is described (sometimes mapped) to help find possible solutions.

6 Communication channels opened
Both sides agree that a solution is needed. Outsiders may help both sides to communicate. Ways to move forward are established.

5 Post-conflict
End of violent confrontation
When one side ‘wins’, it may not lead to positive change. It may create new injustices which could result in confrontation (Stage 2) once again.
How people respond to conflict

- Giving in
- Co-operating
- Compromising
- Forcing
- Indifference

Prioritising relationships and goals

© HRMARS, Pakistan
www.hrmars.com
COMMON TYPES OF CONFLICTS IN ORGANIZATIONS

- Conflicts with authority
- Conflicts between functions

SOME CAUSES:
- Unclear authority structure
- Conflict of interests
- Personal dispute(s)
- Perception of organizational
- Unfair division of work
- Incompetent discipline
- Absence of esprit de corp.
- Interpretation
- Communication
- Who should do what?
- Poor coordination of activities
The Root Causes of Organizational Conflict

- **CHANGE**: internal change in policies, operational procedures, or reorganization and right-sizing causing job insecurity; external changes by state, government or legislation
- **Conflicting values or actions** among managers and employees
Poor Communication

a. Employees experience continuing surprises, they aren't informed of new decisions, programs, etc.
b. Employees don't understand reasons for decisions, they aren't involved in decision-making.
c. As a result, employees trust the "rumor mill" more than management
- Conflicting Goals and Objectives: of two departments; a result of poor planning
- Limited Resources: lack of space, not enough employees, shortage of finances, outdated equipment, etc.
How to Reduce Workplace Conflicts?

Four Steps for Managers:
- Developing Communication Skills
- Clarification of Expectations
- Practicing Interpersonal Skills
- Setting up behavioural consequences

Developing Communication Skills:
- Articulating and Expressing the thoughts and feelings instead of sulking inside
- Giving and Receiving open Feedback
- Using “I” statements instead of “You” statements
- Improving Active Listening Skills
- Empathizing and being Compassionate

© HRMARS, Pakistan
www.hrmars.com
Developing Communication Skills:

2. Establish clear Expectations Adopting a No-Blame Approach Clarifying what is expected Aligning Values and Goals Expectations of Standards and duty Negotiating Performance Standards Collaborating using Win-Win Strategy
Developing Communication Skills:

- Practicing Interpersonal Skills
- Becoming genuinely interested in People
- Separating People from Issues Being sensitive to people
- Acknowledging & Appreciating Treating staff and subordinate like family members
4. Behavioural Consequences

- Removing the rotten apples from the basket or at-least separating the healthy ones from the rotten
- Those who are Un-cooperative and Unwilling to Change, express the consequence of un-desired behaviour in a non-threatening way