

FUNDAMENTALS OF ORGANIZATIONAL BEHAVIOUR **ORGANIZATION CONFLICT**

PRESENTED BY:-

Dr. PARIMITA SINGH

FACULTY,S.S IN COMMERCE,V.U,UJJAIN

Introduction

Organization Conflict is *“the result of incompatible potential relationships. The process begins when one party perceives that another party has impeded, or will frustrate, one or more of its concerns.”* Gordon(1991)

Rahim (2000) defined conflict as a natural outcome of human interaction, which begins when one individual perceives that his or her goals, attitudes, values, or beliefs are incongruent with those of another individual. This incompatibility can arise within an individual, between two individuals or between groups of individuals.

Organizational Conflict is the discord that arises when goals, interests or values of different individuals or groups are incompatible and those people block or thwart each other's efforts to achieve their objectives. Conflict is inevitable given the wide range of goals for the different stakeholder in the organization.

Conflict can be defined as a mental struggle resulting from incompatible or opposing needs, drives, wishes, and external or internal demands. Where there are people, there is conflict. They are usually taken in a negative association. However, this is inaccurate as conflicts are necessary for healthy relationships. It all depends on the approach we use to resolve the conflict.

Approaches to Conflict

Traditional Approach to Conflict

Classical writers view conflict as bad due to the very many adverse effects attached to it. They believe that conflict leads to tension, negative environment and hence reduce the productivity of the organizations. As individuals do not cooperate with each other the efficiency of the organization reduces. Thus the traditional viewpoint of conflict considers conflict negatively.

Modern Approach to Conflict

This approach is also known as an integrationist view of conflict. According to this viewpoint, conflict is not only a positive force in a group but is also necessary for a group to perform effectively. This approach is based on the fact that a peaceful group is prone to become static and non-responsive to the need of change. Conflict increases innovation and creativity. Thus, conflict should not be totally avoided but should be kept under control.

Sources of Conflict



Incompatible goals and time horizons

Different groups have differing goals and focus. An individual having two different goals which might conflict with each other or goal of individual conflicting with organizational goal also leads to conflict.

Overlapping Authority

Two or more managers claim authority for the same activities which leads to conflict between the managers and workers.

Task Interdependencies

One member of a group or a group fails to finish a task that another member or group depends on, causing the waiting worker or group to fall behind.

Incompatible evaluation or reward system

A group is rewarded for achieving a goal, but another interdependent group is rewarded for achieving a goal that conflicts with the first group.

Scarce Resources

Managers can come into conflict over the allocation of scarce resources.

Ex. If one team is provided less resource in comparison to another team to perform the same function it can lead to conflict.

Status Inconsistencies

Some individuals and groups have a higher organizational status than others, leading to conflict with lower status groups.

Ex. A conflict between management and trade union member may only take place because of difference in status.

TYPES OF CONFLICT

Interpersonal

Intrapersonal

Intergroup

Intragroup

Dr. PARIMITA SINGH

Intrapersonal Conflict

Conflict within an individual is thought to arise from the person's goals or roles. This kind of conflict arises when a person's individual conflict does not match with the organizational goals or the individual has more than one goal and those goals do not synchronize with each other.

Role conflict arises when an individual has more than one roles and those roles are not compatible with each other for example a mother working in an organization has an important meeting lined up for a day and that very day her 1 year old daughter is very ill. Now her role as an employee demands her to attend to her work and on the other hand her role as a mother demands her to attend to her daughter.

Intrapersonal conflict takes place within an individual. The person experiences it in his own mind. Thus, it is a type of conflict that is psychological involving the individual's thoughts, values, principles and emotions. Intrapersonal conflict may come in different forms, from the simple mundane ones like deciding whether or not to go vegan for lunch to ones that can affect major decisions such as choosing a career path.

However, this type of conflict can be quite difficult to handle, if you find it hard to decipher your inner struggles. It results in restlessness and uneasiness, or can even cause depression. On such occasions, it is advised to seek a way to let go of the anxiety by communicating with other people. Eventually, when the person finds himself/herself out of the situation, he/she can become more empowered as a person. Thus, the experience invokes a positive change which helps in personal growth.

Interpersonal Conflict

Conflict between individuals due to differences in their goals or values. Ex. Conflict between a supervisor and a subordinate can be termed as interpersonal conflict. A supervisor wants to increase the productivity and for that sets difficult targets for subordinates, while subordinate does not know about the organizational targets hence feels the targets set for him are unreasonable.

Interpersonal conflict means a conflict between two individuals. Basically, this occurs because of some differences in people. We have varied personalities which usually lead to incompatible choices and opinions. So, it is a natural occurrence which can eventually help in personal growth or developing our relationships with others. In addition, adjustments are necessary for managing this type of conflict. However, when interpersonal conflict becomes too destructive, calling in a mediator helps so as to have the issue resolved.

Intra-group Conflict

Conflict within a group or team. In a group when a conflict arises between the different members of the group it can be termed as intra-group conflict.

Intragroup conflict occurs among individuals within a team. The incompatibilities and misunderstandings between team members leads to intragroup conflict. It starts from interpersonal disagreements like team members have different personalities which may lead to tension or differences in views and ideas. Say for example, during a presentation, members of the team might find the notions presented by the one presiding to be erroneous due to their differences in opinion.

Within a team, conflict can be helpful in coming up with decisions, which will eventually allow them to achieve their objectives as a team. But, if the degree of conflict disrupts harmony among the members, then some serious guidance from a different party will be needed for it to be settled.

Intergroup Conflict

Conflict between different groups in the organization are known as inter-group conflict. Ex. Conflict between production team and marketing team.

Intergroup conflict occurs when a misunderstanding arises among different teams within an organization. For example, the marketing department of an organization can come in conflict with the customer support department. This is because of the varied sets of goals and interests of these different groups. In addition to this, competition also contributes to intergroup conflict. There are other factors which increase this type of conflict. Some of these factors may include a rivalry in resources or the boundaries set by a group to others which forms their own identity as a team.

Conflict should not always be perceived as a problem rather at times it is a chance for growth and can be an effective means of opening up among groups or individuals. However, when conflict begins to suppress or disrupt productivity and gives way to more conflicts, then conflict management is what is needed for problem resolution.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Conflict resolution is a method by which two or more parties find a peaceful solution to a disagreement among them. The disagreement can be personal, financial, political, or emotional. When a disagreement arises, often the best course of action is negotiation to resolve the disagreement. We all know that when people gather for a discussion, it is not necessary that what one thinks is right the other thinks the same way, this difference in thinking or mentality leads to conflict.

"I'm doing my best at work and you expect me to do more! Why don't you ask the other team members?" This is the start of a conflict! Let us know about some of the conflict management techniques.

CONFLICT MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES

We get into a conflict when the person opposite to us has a different mindset. It is very common in a workplace to get into differences of opinion.

Sometimes there is a conflict between two or more employees; sometimes employees have a conflict with their managers and so on. Now the question is, how can we manage disagreements in ways that build personal and collegial relationships?

Here are five strategies from conflict management theory for managing stressful situations. None of them is a "one-size-fits-all" answer. Which one is the best in a given situation depends on variety of factors, including an appraisal of the levels of conflict.

Collaborating – win/win

Compromising – win some/lose some

Accommodating – lose/win

Competing – win/lose

Avoiding – no winners/no losers

COLLABORATING

This technique follows the rule "I win, you win". Collaborating means working together by integrating ideas set out by multiple people. The objective here is to find a creative solution acceptable to everyone. It calls for a significant time commitment but is not appropriate for all conflicts.

This technique is used in situations where –

There is a high level of trust

We don't want to take complete responsibility

We want others to also have "ownership" of solutions

People involved are willing to change their thinking

We need to work through animosity and hard feelings

However, this process takes a lot of time and energy and some may take advantage of other people's trust and openness.

Example – A businessman should work collaboratively with the manager to establish policies, but collaborative decision-making regarding office supplies wastes time better spent on other activities.

COMPROMISING

This technique follows the rule "You bend, I bend". Compromising means adjusting with each other's opinions and ideas, and thinking of a solution where some points of both the parties can be entertained. Similarly, both the parties need to give up on some of their ideas and should agree with the other.

This technique can be used in situations where –

- People of equal levels are equally committed to goals

- Time can be saved by reaching intermediate settlements on individual parts of complex matters

- Goals are moderately important

Important values and long-term objectives can be derailed using this technique. This process may not work if initial demands are high and mainly if there's no commitment to honor the compromise solutions.

Example – Two friends had a fight and they decide to compromise with each other through mutual understanding.

ACCOMMODATING

This technique follows the rule "I lose, you win". Accommodating means giving up of ideas and thoughts so that the other party wins and the conflict ends. This technique can be used when –

An issue is not that important to us as it is to the other person

We realize we are wrong

We are willing to let others learn by mistake

We know we cannot win

It is not the right time and we would prefer to simply build credit for the future

Harmony is extremely important

What the parties have in common is a good deal more important than their differences

However, using this technique, one's own ideas don't get attention and credibility, and influence can be lost.

Example – When we fight with someone we love we choose to let them win.

COMPETING

This technique follows the rule "I win, you lose". Competing means when there is a dispute a person or a group is not willing to collaborate or adjust but it simply wants the opposite party to lose. This technique can be used when –

We know you are right.

Time is short and a quick decision is to be made.

A strong personality is trying to steamroll us and we don't want to be taken advantage of.

We need to stand up for our rights.

This technique can further escalate conflict or losers may retaliate.

Example – When in a debate the party with more facts wins.

AVOIDING

This technique follows the rule "No winners, no losers". Avoiding means the ideas suggested by both the parties are rejected and a third person is involved who takes a decision without favoring any of the parties. This technique can be used when –

The conflict is small and relationships are at stake

We are counting to ten to cool off

More important issues are pressing and we feel we don't have time to deal with this particular one

We have no power and we see no chance of getting our concerns met

We are too emotionally involved and others around us can solve the conflict more successfully

Using this technique may lead to postponing the conflict, that may make matters worse.

Example – Rahul and Rohit had a fight, their mother came and punished both of them.

Positive Effects of Organizational Conflict

Organization Conflict might be considered as a concept having only negative attached to it but the truth is it has its positives too. The positive outcomes of Organizational Conflict are as follows:

Release of Tension: Organizational Conflicts gives a chance to the members of a group to release their tension which otherwise would have remained suppressed in the hearts of all and lead to decrease in their efficiency.

Creativity: In order to resolve the organizational conflict the members of the group display innovation and creativity by thinking of new and alternative ideas, which otherwise would not have come to the forefront.

Stimulation of Change: Organizational Conflicts gives way to change

Identification of Weaknesses: An organizational conflict usually unveils the weaknesses in the system,

Group Cohesiveness: Inter- group conflict promotes group cohesiveness as all members of one group stand together against the other.

Dysfunctions of Organizational Conflict

The negative outcomes of Organizational conflict can paralyze the organization. Following are the negative aspects of Organizational Conflict:

Resignation of Personnel: In case of inter- personal and intra- personal conflict individuals resign from the organization in case not a fruitful resolve is reached. This harms the organization.

Tensions: Negative environment is created in the organization which leads to anxiety, frustration among the members and that in turn lead to decrease in efficiency, productivity and profitability. This also leads to increase in wastage, spoilage, absenteeism.

Discontentment: Individuals working in the organizations who loose in the organizational conflict feel very discontent if the resolution is not in their favor and look for an opportunity to settle scores with the winning party.

Creation of distrust: Once there is a conflict between two parties it becomes difficult to create trust between the two parties. Distrust leads to negative feelings and lack of cooperation.

Goal Displacement: Employees lose sight of the organizational conflict and concentrate on finding tactics to come out as winners in the conflict.

Weakening of Organization: If management is not able to handle the organizational conflict it might take a disastrous shape and harm the organization. Management of organizational conflict is important for the health of the organization. Organizational conflict leads to tension and ultimately resignation of employees which weakens the organization.

Summary

- ❑ Organizational Conflict is the discord that arises when goals, interests or values of different individuals or groups are incompatible and those people block or thwart each other's efforts to achieve their objectives.
- ❑ Organizational conflict has both positive and negative effects.
- ❑ Organizational Conflict can be of various types: Intrapersonal, Interpersonal, Intra-group and Inter-group
- ❑ Organizational Conflict can be caused due to incompatible goals and time horizons, overlapping authority, task interdependencies, incompatible evaluation or reward system, scarce resources and status inconsistencies.
- ❑ Conflict has five stages namely, latent, perceived, felt, manifest and conflict aftermath.
- ❑ There are two approaches to conflict namely, traditional and modern.

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