Conflict Management

INTRODUCTION

To study the dynamics of organizational behaviour, study of conflict management deserves attention. In present corporate environment conflict has become very common phenomenon. Conflict is bad as it has adverse effects on the individual performance. If conflict is beyond control it takes a destructive dimension. When employees do not cope up with the conflict situation, there is an increased absenteeism and exit of employees. It can be so disastrous that can lead to demise of an organization. American Firm Shea and Gould perished due to high degree of conflict. On the other hand it has been opinioned that conflict is good for the organization as it produces new ideas, increases competitive sprit, cohesiveness in the team and instills an atmosphere of brotherhood in the organization. This is only possible if ideas are properly chanalised and there is proper delegation of authority, empowerment and autonomy in functioning.

Definitions

Conflict can be defined (Thomas K.A.)[1] as the **"process that begins when one party perceives that another party has negatively affected something that the first party cares about[1]."** Conflict must be perceived by either of the parties. Stiff opposition due to incompatibility of organizational goals characterizes it. Conflict can also be caused due to difference about interpretation of facts or issues involved. Conflict takes an ugly turn and take a form of violence due to disagreement based on behavioral expectations. It could be covert or overt and can be seen when one observes violent acts of individual in organizations. Austin et al[2] defines conflict **"as a disagreement between two or more individuals or groups, with each individual or group trying to gain acceptance of its views or objective over others."**

Nature and scope of conflict

Every organization has its objective. It is further broken down as departmental objectives, group goals and lastly individual goals. When individual interacts with another individual there is perceptual and communication problems that causes misunderstanding and leads to individual conflict situation. It is also true of groups. Group conflicts indicate the way of inter-group behaviour in an organization. This is more relevant in the Indian context,

where inter-union rivalry is most cognigible. Inter-group conflict occurs due to group competition and group cohesiveness. This leads to a feeling of **'we'** and **'they'**. "We are always right and they are always wrong". Hence a beginning of conflict. Aims and objectives of various organizations differ drastically that give rise to greater competition hence a high level of conflict. Conflict can arise between employer and employees, management and workers, one department and another, stakeholders, shareholders, producer and customers and between various trade unions that are often politically motivated. Schein[3] has pointed out that, this problem exits because as groups become more committed to their goals and norms, they are likely to become competitive with one another and seek to undermine their rivals' activities, thereby becoming a liability to the organization as a whole. The overall problem, then, is how to establish high productive, collaborative inter-group relations. Michael[4] states that conflict can lead to breakdown in standard mechanism of decision making so that an individual or group experiences difficulty in selecting an action alternative. The breakdown may be because of competing demands on an individual or group rivalry and competition. There can be vertical and horizontal conflicts; or individual conflict, group conflict and organizational conflict.

Conflict can be considered as expression of hostility, negative attitude, aggression and gross misunderstanding. It is caused due to varying interest of individual or groups. Pondy[5] has described that the term 'conflict' is used in four ways to indicate

1. Antecedent conditions of conflictual behaviour, such as scarcity of resources.
2. Affective states of individuals involved such as stress, tension, hostility, anxiety etc.
3. Cognitive state of individuals, that is their perception or awareness or conflictual situations.
4. Conflictual behaviour, ranging from passive resistance to overt aggression.

Functional and Dysfunctional Conflict

Conflict that supports the individual and group goals, which leads to higher performance is called **functional conflict** while the conflicts that hinders individual or group performance is called **dysfunctional conflict**. The latter generally takes destructive form. There is thin margin between the two types of conflicts mentioned above. While evaluating the impact of conflict on goal achievement, individual perception and effect of group performance should be evaluated. If the conflict contributes towards higher performance then the conflict should be called *functional* or otherwise dysfunctional. Conflict can be broadly classified in three types i.e*. **task oriented conflict, behavioural conflict and *structural conflict* or *process conflict.*** Task conflict relates to the group goals or objectives to be achieved by the group while behavioral conflict relates to individual's value system, approach, attitude, ego state, skill and norms being followed by him. Studies reveal that most of the dysfunctional conflict fall under this category. Process conflict is related to how a task is being accomplished in the organization. It is related with various processes, procedures, drills and instructions that are being followed on a particular job. When individual differs in this regard, conflict arises. This type of conflict can be eliminated to a large extent by following strict discipline in the work procedure and adhering to the rules and regulations. Positive points of functional conflict is as under:

Functional Conflict

1. Conflict develops cohesiveness within the group members. A group goal therefore becomes a priority. Individual goals are then relegated to secondary position.
2. Conflict leads to innovation and creativity, as there is competing sprit among various groups.
3. Conflict provides challenging work environment and enhances opportunities for self-development of group that leads to formation of group norms.
4. Enhance work culture leads to upgradation of various systems within the organization and therefore growth is achieved.

Dysfunctional Conflict

Conflict may turn out to be detrimental and disastrous and having deleterious effects. Dysfunctional nature of conflict can be identified in the following circumstances:

1. When conflict does not lead to solution.
2. When basic goals of the organization are neglected.
3. People should be treated with due respect. If it is violated and a climate of distrust and suspicion is created people feel defeated and demeaned which develops antagonism and leads to conflict.
4. Conflict may lead to absenteeism and subsequently to increased turn over if not controlled in time.
5. Dual management style may create hatred and lead to dysfunctional conflict.
6. Disagreement with management may be considered as disloyalty, if this environment prevails, an opportunity for creativity would be lost and employees would loose interest in their job. This would lead to increased conflicting situations.

TRANSITION OF CONFLICT

1. Traditional view

During 1930-40s, conflict was considered to be bad and viewed negatively. It was considered harmful, unnecessary and considered synonymous to violence, destruction and irrational. The view held that the conflict arose due to poor communication, lack of openness, lack of trust and failure of managers to be responsive to the needs and aspirations of their employees. The view further held that the conflict must be avoided at all costs. During the same period, the scientific management and administrative school of management that were in the state of evolution, developed such organizational structure where responsibilities had been properly laid down, rules, regulations and policies had been inbuilt in the system. Thus a proper mechanism was introduced in the management systems and an adequate attention was paid by the managerial staff to ensure that there was no misunderstanding among the employees and that the conflict was avoided.

2. Human Relations View

Human relations view, which prevailed between 1940-70 states that conflict is a natural occurrence of individual behaviour and that the conflict cannot be avoided. The theory propagated that we must accept conflict since we can not eliminate the same. It further

states that organizations must lay down proper policy and procedure, set achievable goals. Have proper communication and thereby avoid stress and strain. Resources should be properly allocated and steps taken to avoid occurrence of conflict. An environment of trust, cooperation, friendship and sharing is built amongst the employees so that increased productivity for the organization is achieved. Avoidance of conflict and trust building is the key for the prosperity of the organization.

3. Behavioural View

Behavioural scientists encourage conflict on various grounds. They feel that a group having inter group harmonious relations, peace and cooperation among group members is likely to be non-vibrant, static in nature and can display apathetic attitude towards group members. In this situation the groups are non responsive. What is required today is innovation, creativity and an ability of the group to meet the social obligations. Hence there is a need for maintaining minimal level of conflict within the group. This would lead to group being viable. Group members should be self-critical and develop creativity. Minimum level of conflict between the groups would increase competitiveness that will lend itself to higher productivity and increased job satisfaction. It must be borne in mind that only minimum level of conflict is necessary for it to be beneficial. Behavioral view proposes that because people differ in their attitudes, values and goals, conflict is but a natural outcome in any group of people and that it can be helpful and constructive. (Chandan Jit S)[6]. The neo-classicists emphasized the understanding of individual psychology, development of informal groups, informal leadership, and a democratic-participative leadership style so as to avoid conflicts and establish harmony in the organization.

4. Modern View

The *modern view* holds that conflict may be necessary for organizational effectiveness. It is believed that harmonious, peaceful and cooperative groups can become static and uninnovative. Minimum level of conflict that keeps the group alive, self critical and creative is desirable. Modernists believe that conflict is structural in nature, is inevitable and endemic to the organizational milieu. It is a product of systems and determined by structural factors and integral to the nature of change. When groups interact there is bound to be difference of opinion and disagreements, which is a cause for conflict. It exists even when there is single individual who is faced with organizational problems like decision making. Conflict should be welcomed and managed effectively. Some of the positive points of minimum level of conflict are as under:

(*a*) Conflict should be expressed. By doing so, communication between two groups is restored that promotes growth.

(*b*) Minimum level of conflict serves as pre-requisite for organizational development. Conflict brings changes.

(*c*) Conflict helps achieve cohesion within the group that develops group identity and members of the group follow group norms setting aside personal problems. This tendency leads higher level of productivity, sense of identity with the organization and increases group ability to compete with groups and departments.

(*d*) Poor decisions are detrimental to organizational growth. Minimum level of conflict promotes stimulus for analytical thinking, which may challenge views, policies and

systems prevailing in the organization. It will lead to reviews hence new policies may be introduced in the organization.

(*e*) Conflict can serve as power equalizer between two parties. This is clearly observed during management union meetings. While management is powerful at the beginning of the discussion it however tends to equalize itself as the discussion proceeds.

Causes of Conflict

Communicational Aspect: Communication is an important process in the organization. Poor communication, passing of an incomplete information to a department may cause conflict because this may have far reaching consequences in attainment of organizational goals. Importance of full and complete communication cannot be over emphasized in the fast moving organizations in the present era of information technology. Some of the reasons for poor communication are as under:

(*a*) *Inadequate communication:* where too much or too little information is passed from one department to the other.

(*b*) *Filtration effect:* where end receiver receives very scant information having little or no value.

(*c*) *When information is not received on time*: it must be noted that delayed information has no value as the decision might have already been taken without the information.

(*d*) *Barriers of culture, language.*

(*e*) *Inadequate training of sender and receiver.*

(*f*) *Noise problems.*

Behavioural View

Types of Conflict

As discussed earlier, organizations exist based on various groups and departments where scares resources have to be put in to use through various processes. Systems and sub-systems exist in the organizations that are managed by individuals and work teams or work groups. While interacting with each other on individual, team or group levels, there may be occasions when conflict occurs due to perceptual differences. The conflict may be intra-personal, inter-personal, intra-group, inter-group or intra-organizational in nature. These are discussed below.

Intra-personal Conflict: Intra personal conflict is also called the conflict within the individual. This type of conflict can be of two types

(*a*) **Value conflict:** Every individual has to play certain roles, which conforms to his value system. However, there are certain situations when an individual may have to compromise on value system and beliefs. For example, finance manager of an organization, while submitting tax returns to the government may conceal some facts, which may go against his belief and value system. This situation may cause tension and conflict within the individual.

(*b*) **Decision-making:** Problem solving is one of the important jobs every individual has to undertake in work environment. Every problem has various courses open. At times it is difficult for a person to select an appropriate course of action. This

situation causes conflict within the individual. He therefore will have to take decisions based on the past experience and the knowledge. It may be noted that decision-making has become simpler these days due to *firstly*; information technology where required data is available and *secondly*, group decision is the norm in most of the organizations.

Inter-personal Conflict

Inter-personal conflict relates to conflict between two or more individuals and is probably the most common and recognized form of conflict. Interpersonal conflict is caused due to disagreement over goals and objectives of the organization. These are heightened due to difference of opinion of individuals and when issues are not based on facts. Every organization is full of unresolved issues, problems and differing situations that leads to conflict. Conflict can also take place between one person of a group with another person of the same group or another group on issues relating to decision-making. Individuals may have a difference of opinion on selection of a particular course of action that will lead to disagreement and often result in the conflict. It is the merit of the issue, and willingness of members of the organization to accept the others point of view that will avoid the conflict situation.

Intra-Group Conflict

Intra-group conflict relates to values, status and roles played by an individual in the group and the group norms. Individual may want to remain in the group for social needs but may disagree with the methods and procedures followed by the group. The conflict may arise when social changes are incorporated in the group. When group faces new problems and when values are changed due to change in social environment. Intra-group conflict is like Inter-personal conflict except that the people involved in the conflict episode belong to a common group.

Inter-Group Conflict

Conflicts between different groups, sections and departments are called inter-group conflict. For example, conflict between production and sales departments over the quality being produced and the customer requirements. Inter-group conflict causes due to factors inherent to the organizational structure like independence, inconsistency in various policy matter, variance on promotion criteria, reward system and different standards being adopted for different sub-units and departments. Organizational objectives can only be achieved when all departments work towards attainment of organizational goals. This is possible when interactions between departments are smooth and cordial. Conflict can be avoided by better communication between departments, joint decision making, removing disparity in group goals and paying due respect and displaying concern for other group's views.

Inter-Organizational Conflict

Inter-organizational conflict takes place between two dependent organizations. Conflict can take place between government organization, unions and the operating industry. Government organizations function to ensure that minimum standards are followed by the organizations. Managers must try and reduce inter-organizational conflicts by adopting

positive approach and by following strictly, the rules and regulations laid down by the government agencies. Conflict can also take place between seller and buyer organizations.

Intra-Organizational Conflicts

Intra organizational conflict encompasses *horizontal, vertical, line–staff and role based conflicts*. Let us briefly study these situations.

Horizontal Conflict

Horizontal Conflict is caused due to incompatibility of goals, sharing limited resources and difference in time orientation. It leads to tension, misunderstanding and frustration on the part of both the parties. Horizontal conflict relates to employees or group at the same level. Organizational goal at implementation level vary from department to department. Finance department may not be able to spare additional amount as may be required by research and development department for new product development, that may cause tension, misunderstanding between two individuals or departments. Individuals may not be able to meet the targets of production in given time due to variety of reason that may cause conflict with sales department as the latter would like to flood the market with their product to make the presence felt. It has been seen that due to increased interdependence of individuals or groups to carry out various functions, situations do arise where there is difference of opinion on issues that cause conflict between individuals or groups.

Vertical Conflict

Vertical conflict refers to conflicts that might take place between different levels of hierarchy. Conflicts between subordinates and superior occur due to incompatibility. It is generally caused because of differences in perception, value system, goals that may be assigned, cognition and difference in individual behaviour. Conflict is also caused due to inappropriate communication between individuals at two different levels.

Line and Staff Conflict

Line and staff conflict has been traditional. Line authority creates product and services and contributes directly towards the revenue generation. While staff authority assists line authority and acts in advisory capacity. Staff and line authority have a different predispositions and goals. They have different skills and expertise. Since staff authority (managers) are in the chain of command and have a day to day assess to the top boss, have a tendency to dictate terms to the line authority and usually disregard the working know-ledge of the line authority. They have tendency to dominate and disregard the efforts put in by line authority managers. On the contrary staff managers have a technical know how and they are able to advice the line authority to cut down cost of production and save on wastage etc. Line authority does not like their advice at times. Staff managers get frustrated when their suggestions and ideas are not implemented by line managers and hence the cause for conflict. In the process the organizational goals are not achieved as per plans.

Role Conflict

A person in an organization has to perform various roles. Conflict arises when roles assigned to him have different expectation. *'Time'* management may cause conflict. A person may be asked to take care of an additional section in the absence of section head. Value system in

an organization is also a cause for conflict. Supervisor is asked to be honest while he is dealing with sale of the product while the same person may be asked to pay commision to an official from whom a sanction is required to be obtained, thereby causing a conflict situation in the ethical value system of an individual. When an individual is line or a staff employee and also a union representative, has to perform duties of conflicting nature hence a role conflict.

CONFLICT PROCESS

Pondy developed a conflict process model, which is useful to understand how a conflict starts. He has delineated five steps that he calls as 'conflict episode'. These are ***latent conflict, perceived conflict, felt conflict manifest conflict, conflict resolution and conflict aftermath.*** The process is adopted and explained Figure 11.1 below.
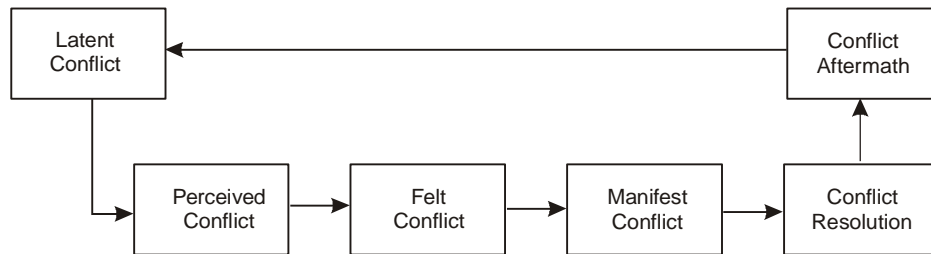

Fig. 11.1. Pondy's Conflict episode Process

Latent Conflict

It is a first stage of conflict when conflict-promoting situations appear on the scene between individuals and groups. In this stage potential conflict inducing forces exist. For example demand for various resources by departments when some may get and be satisfied and others may not get and be dissatisfied. Hence there may exist a situation between two groups. At this stage the seeds of dissatisfaction has been sown.

Perceived Conflict

When one party frustrate the design of the other party, people perceive that a confluctual conditions exist. For example sales manager may need additional budget for promotional activities which financial manager may not release. The sales manager may attribute lack of finance as potential cause for fall in sales. Thus a conflict between the two may brew. At this stage the conflict does not surface.

Felt Conflict

At this stage, the conflict is actually felt and cognised. As stated earlier, the funds are not released by the finance manager and the problem is being surfaced and there is a likelihood of confrontation.

Manifest Conflict

In this stage, there is not only recognition or acknowledgement of conflict but also

manifestation of conflict by covert or overt behaviour. It is a stage of open dispute. Both parties devise their strategies to face each other. In the above example sales manager may make his point for additional funds for promotional activities especially during festival season. Finance manager may openly turn down the request since he might have allotted additional funds for procurement of better raw material for production department. Sales manager may argue that better raw material has no meaning unless the facts are brought to the notice of customers, which can only be done through promotional campaign. The debate may be unending and frustrating.

Conflict Aftermath

Once the conflict is resolved between the two parties, there is always a party, which is looser because the resolution is the outcome of win – lose or the compromise strategy, a stage is set for subsequent conflict episodes. A party, which feels defeated, may start preparations and be on the look out for the assault to take the revenge. Conflict resolution has been added as an additional box in the figure to elucidate that conflict aftermath is a direct function of the results of the conflict resolution style adopted and exercised in any given situation.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION MODEL

Conflict between parties can be resolved by five different modes. Parties involved may adopt any of the following solutions, which are explained in Figure 11.2 below.
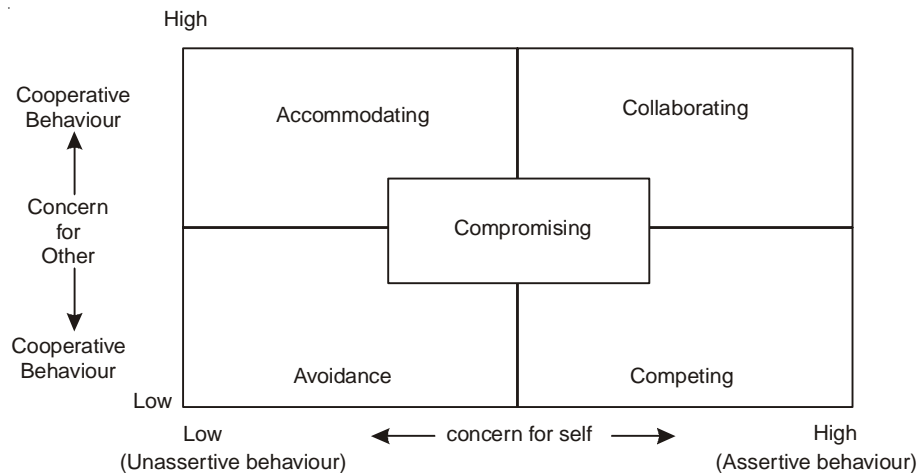

Fig. 11.2. Conflict resolution model

Avoidance

One or both parties could ***avoid*** facing the conflict. The situation pertains to un-cooperative and unassertive behaviour on the part of parties involved. A Party may avoid facing B Party. When situation reaches a point of negligence by A Party, B Party may take advantage of the situation. By avoiding, the individual might side step, postpone or even withdraw from the conflictuating situation. This strategy is useful when issues involved in conflict are of a very minor nature or when more important issues deserve attention. This strategy

suits a manager whose power base is very low and there is no chance of satisfying one's own concerns. Avoidance strategy should be applied when one feels that people in the organization should cool down so that the issue can be handled at a latter date in a better psychological environment. The issue can also be postponed if additional information is required to be obtained. Avoidance is a poor strategy hence if someone else is able to handle the situation of conflict more effectively, should be allowed to do so. Managers having high score on avoidance as a strategy of conflict management, may suffer from delayed decision making and hence the loss to the organization. Those who have a low score on avoidance thereby wanting to attend to every single issue may spend lot of time on every trivial issue, hurt people's feelings and stir hostility in the organization that should be taken care of.

Competing

This strategy may be adopted when other strategies of conflict resolution are not workable. Competing is also useful in emergencies where quick decisions are required. In this strategy power must be used unilaterally as a weapon when unpopular decisions like termination, pay cuts, layoffs, cost cutting and enforcing discipline are required to be taken. This strategy is based on win-lose principle of managing conflicts. The managers who are high on power base have an added advantage in using competing strategy because people from opposite side would not dare confront a person who is so powerful. There is a tendency that managers using this strategy should be careful about 'yes' men around them. They should identify conflicting situations and take bold decisions based on win-lose strategy. On the other hand there are managers who are low on competing mode, are likely to feel powerless in many situations. Not realizing that though they have power but they are not comfortable using it. By trying to use power, one could enhance one's achievement. Another drawback in scoring low is that such individuals find it difficult to take bold stand on various issues concerning organizations. In situations when a manager is very low on 'concern for the people' may postpone vital decisions on matters pertaining to subordinates that may be detrimental to organizational effectiveness.

Collaborating

Strategy of collaboration involves attempt of one party to work with the other party in co-operative manner and find solutions to the problem for mutual benefits. The strategy involves identification of areas of disagreement, examining the issue in greater detail and a workable solution arrived at, which is for mutual benefit. This strategy signifies when two sets of solutions are important for both parties to be compromised. Hence finding integrated solution become imperative. This strategy signifies joint efforts, gain for both parties and integrated solutions arrived at by consensual decisions. Sekaran[7] concluded that when people are *high* on collaborating, they have to be concerned about how they spend their time and other organizational resources. Collaboration is time and energy consuming. Not all situations need collaborative solutions. Over use of collaboration and consensual decision-making may reflect risk aversion tendencies or an inclination to defuse responsibility. When people score *low* on collaborating, they may fail to capitalizes on situations, which would benefit immensely from joint problem solving. Also by ignoring the concerns of employees, decisions and policies may be evolved, which make the

organizational members both unhappy and uncommitted to the system. The strategy attempts a win— win solutions to their goals

Accommodating

In accommodating mode a person scarifies his own interest for accommodating other person's interest. It is form of selfless generosity, obeying other person's point of view. This mode is usually adopted when other person's view is stronger, you want to achieve goodwill and indicate that you are reasonable. This strategy of conflict resolution is important when you want other person to give at a later date when it favours you. Sekaran concluded that when people are *high* on accommodating score they might be differing too much to the wishes of others and pay very little attention to their own ideas and concern even though they may realize that they are not getting the attention they deserve. This might even lower one's self esteem in addition to depriving on the influence, respect and recognition from others, since it negates the potential contribution that individuals are capable of making to the organization. While individual *low* on accommodating score, they should start thinking about whether they lack the goodwill of others and whether others perceive them as unreasonable, uncompromising, rigid and demanding.

Compromising

In conflict situation, compromising is a mode when both parties try to find out some expedient, mutually acceptable solution that sacrifices both the parties partially. In compromising, there is no clear winner or loser. None of the party is fully satisfied as they ration the object of conflict and accept the solution which is not complete to either of the parties. In compromising, there is a possibility of an atmosphere of *'gamesmanship'* in the work environment. There is also a possibility of compromising on certain principles of behaviour which is not desirable. Values, ethics, principles and long term objectives of the organization must be protected while adopting compromising. When people are tough to compromise, they find it hard to make concessions and land up in power struggle that must be avoided. Compromising policies can easily be adopted when competing or collaboration strategy fails. Research indicates that people have underlying disposition to handle conflict in certain ways. Especially individuals have preferences among the five conflict handling intensions. Their preferences tend to be relied upon quite consistently, and a persons intensions can be predicted rather well from a combination of intellectual and personality characteristics. When confronting conflict situation, some people want to win it at any cost, some wants to find an optimum solution, some want to run away, others want to be obliging, and still others want to *"split the differences"* (Robbins Stephen P.)[8].

SUMMARY

Conflict management deserves attention in present corporate environment. Conflict is a process that begins when one party perceives that another party has negatively affected something that the first party cares about. Conflict can be considered as an expression of hostility, negative attitude, aggression and gross misunderstanding. Conflict can be functional or dysfunctional. It is of three types namely task oriented conflict, behavioral conflict and structural or process oriented confllict. Traditional view of conflict (1930-40) considers conflict as harmful and synonimous to violance, distruction and irrational. Human

relations era which was prevalent during the period of 1940-70 considered conflict as natural phenomenon and recommends various steps to avoid its occurance. Behavioural view on the other hand encourages conflict for creativity, higher productivity and for achieving group cohesiveness. It recommends elaborate steps to keep it as minimum as possible. Propagaters of Modern view feel that conflict is structural in nature, is inevitable and endemic to organizational milieu. It is integral to process of change.They recommend proper management of conflict as it promotes high level of competition between individuals and groups. Intra-personal conflict occurs when there is a conflict of values, that may relates to roles that an individual is required to play and decisions he has to take in the organization. Inter-personal conflict occurs due to dis-agreement over the goals of the organization. These are further aggravated due to difference of opinion. Inter- group and inter-departmental conflict take place when universality of policies, procedures and standards do not exist. Intra-organizational conflicts relates to horizontal, vertical and line and staff conflicts.

Conflict must be resolved based on the model given by Pondy. Conflict can also be resolved by displaying high co-operative behaviour. It can take various forms like avoiding, accomodating, collaborating and compromising on various issues between individuals, groups and organizations. Minimum level of conflict can keep groups vibrant, cohesive and creative.

TEXT QUESTIONS

Q. 1 Define conflict. What forms does it take in an organization?
Q. 2 Explain functional and dysfunctional conflict?
Q. 3 What are various types of conflict. Explain.
Q. 4 How has transition of conflict taken place?
Q. 5 Explain with help of diagram Pondy's conflict management process.
Q. 6 What are various causes of conflict?
Q. 7 Explain conflict resolution model?
Q. 8 Visit one of the industrial organizations in your neighbourhood and study conflict management adopted by them.
Q. 9 Conflict can be benefitial if it is kept to minimun. Explain the statemnent
Q. 10 Write shorts notes on the following:

(*a*) Latent conflict	(*b*) Perceived conflict
(*c*) Felt conflict	(*d*) Manifest conflict
(*e*) Conflict aftermath	(*f*) Behavioural conflict
(*g*) Inter-personal conflict	(*h*) What forms a conflict can take

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Case Study

ESCALATION OF CONFLICT THROUGH ENDOWED CHAIR

Dr. Anant, Chairman of the department of management, and Dr. Basant, Chairman of the accountancy department, had always experienced awkwardness whenever they interacted with each other during the executive committee and other meetings. The management department had an excellent group of faculty members who were not only reputed for their research but were also first rate teachers. No other department in the entire system had such a group of profile writers in any one unit. In fact, the management department faculty and their chairman did entertain feelings of superiority even though they tried not to express it blatantly. Because of their research productivity and national reputation, the university allocated more resources to the management department – more funded trips to conferences, more Xeroxing money, more secretarial assistance, and the like.

Dr. Basant was also proud of his accountancy department faculty because the members were extremely active and successful in acquiring consulting projects and generating a lot of money for themselves and for the department. They worked with the big accounting firms and private sector organizations. These firms donated generously to the department. Because of all the money generated, the faculty had carpeted office, specialized stationery, and other status symbols. Actually, the accountancy department looked like a private company's show room, with Kashmir carpets, fancy furniture, an impressive conference room, and expensive decorative pieces.

Privately, the management department referred to the accountancy department as "the greatest show on earth", and the latter referred to the management faculty as "pen pushers". On one occasion three of the management faculty had to go to the accountancy department to obtain the tax professor's clarification on the recent budget statements made by the Finance Minister. They had to wait in the department's waiting area for the faculty member who had just stepped out of his office. Dr. Basant who happened to come out at that time remarked jokingly to the waiting members, "You must find it pleasant to sit in soft sofas after sitting on hard chairs the whole day in your offices". When Dr. Anant heard about this, he issued a memo to all his faculty that they should try to use the intercom as much as possible in the future and not bother other department faculty with personal visits to their officers. Of courses, everyone knew that the memo was the outcome of his resentment towards Dr. Basant's remarks.

Shortly after these incidents, the management department received a capital fund donation from one of its alumni, which would fetch an annual interest of Rs. 50,000. Mr. Ramesh Mehra, the donor was the President of a very prosperous, privately owned company. Mr. Ramesh Mehra, had received his M.S. degree in management 10 years ago, and had risen to the top within that time. He had always had high regard for the research – oriented faculty of the management department, and though it would be an excellent idea to fund an "Endowed Chair" for the department. This would enable the management department chairman to bring in some international scholar of repute from time to time which would further enhance the prestige of the department. Mr. Mehra was not entirely guided by philanthropy alone since he was also considering the advantages to the company by claiming the donation as a tax write-off. The management department chairman, of course, gratefully accepted the offer.

As the company's P.R. people tried to gain publicity for the donation, the management department chairman and several members of the faculty were interviewed by the press. The ceremonial award of the "Endowed Chair" by the president of the company to the department chairman was nationally televised. The company and the management department were very much in the news for several days.

When Dr. Basant met Dr. Anant in the corridor one day as all this was happening, he congratulated Anant and said with a hint of sarcasm that it must be a great feeling to receive such a donation, especially since this would be the first time that they have generated funds from outside the University system. Dr. Anant thanked Basant and said that if the accountancy department needed any assistance in getting its faculty to publish, his faculty "will be glad to share their knowledge with them on how to go about doing research and publishing". After this episode the two chairman did not even exchange greeting in the hallway. Faculty members from both departments started to make innuendos and snide remarks at each other in the classroom while lecturing to students. When all this reached the ears of the Principal of the College through the grapevine, he called the two department chairman and gave them a severe dressing down. He reminded them of their unprofessional behaviour and their deplorable conduct. In effect, he asked them to "mend or end". Though things seemed to quieter down considerably immediately after this, students still heard the management department faculty insinuating about the accountancy department and vice-versa. The Principal was not unaware of what was happing and was pondering about how to resolve the problem once and for all.

Analyse the situation above and write up the case analysis.

SKILL DEVELOPMENT EXERCISE

Understand Your Own Conflict Management Style

Instructions

Imagine that you are in situations where you do not agree with another person and try to respond to the following with that orientation.

Below, you will find several pairs of statements describing possible behavioural responses to situations. For each pair, circle the "A" or the "B" statement which is most characteristic of your own behaviour. In some cases neither the "A" nor the "B" statements would be representative of your behaviour. even so, try to select that which comes closest to what you may be likely to do.

The responses which you circle will offer you a good understanding of your conflict-handling style.

1. A. I frequently decide that I should not bother about the differences in our viewpoints.
   B. I try to get my way.
2. A. I try not to hurt the other's feelings so that our relationship can be maintained.
   B. I do all that is necessary to avoid tensions.
3. A. I get all the issues out in the open and discuss them.
   B. I try to postpone issues till I have had time to think.
4. A. I try to seek a solution which is neither totally what I want nor what the other person wants.
   B. I try to assert my viewpoint.
5. A. Many times I let the other person take on the responsibility for solving problem situations.
   B. Instead of trying to negotiate the things on which I might disagree with another, I usually emphasize the aspects on which we both agree.
6. A. I am very goal-oriented and pursue my own goals.
   B. I try to patch up so that our friendship is not spoilt.
7. A. I establish a middle ground.
   B. I do not think that I should worry about the differences.
8. A. I take a middle ground.
   B. I insist on my points being heard.
9. A. I firmly pursue my goals.
   B. I try to avoid frictions.
10. A. I usually try to find a solution which is more compromising in nature.
    B. I usually try to handle all of the other party's as well as my own concerns.
11. A. I try not to handle controversial issues.
    B. If it makes him happy, I let him have his say.
12. A. I try not to create unpleasantness for myself.
    B. I try to win my own position.
13. A. I try to be logical and show him the advantages of my position.
    B. I try to be sensitive to his wishes.
14. A. To make the other person happy, I let him have his way.
    B. I will give in some, if he will give in some.

15. A. I start working through the differences immediately.
    B. I try to see what is fair for both.
16. A. I try to deal with both persons' wishes.
    B. I let him solve the problem.
17 A. I usually search for a compromise solution.
    B. I usually let go of my own wishes so that the other person's needs are taken care of.
18. A. I try to establish a middle ground.
    B. I try to satisfy both our wishes.
19. A. I firmly stick to my point of view.
    B. I work out a solution with the other person.
20. A. If the matter is that important to him, I let him have his way.
    B. I insist on a compromise.
21. A. I usually get everyone's concerns out in the open.
    B. I usually try to give in and preserve our friendship.
22. A. While negotiating, I take the other's feelings into consideration.
    B. I deal with the issue directly, placing all the cards on the table.
23. A. I feel strongly about pursuing my goals.
    B. I feel compromise solutions are the best.
24. A. I take time to think over the issue before starting to discuss it.
    B. I give in some to gain some.
25. A. I would rather not hurt the other's feelings.
    B. I jointly work out the problem with the other person.
26. A. I try not hurt the other's feelings.
    B. I convince the other of the logic of my statement.
27. A. I express my ideas and ask for his.
    B. I try to convince him of the benefits of my ideas.
28. A. I firmly pursuer my goals.
    B. I try to get all the issues out on the table.
29. A. I generally avoid controversial situations.
    B. I pursue a policy of give and take.
30. A. I invariably work with the other person's help to come up with a solution.
    B. I try my best to do whatever is necessary to avoid tensions.

Scoring:

Circle the items below which you circled against each item of the questionnaire you have just completed.

S. No.	Competing	Collaborating	Compromising	Avoiding	Accommodating
1.	B				A
2.				A	B
3.		A		B	
4.	B		A		
5.				A	B
6.	A				B
7.			A	B	
8.	B		A		
9.	A			B	
10.		B	A		
11.				A	B
12.	A			B	
13.	A				B
14.			B		A
15.		A	B		
16.		A		B	
17.		A			B
18.		B	A		
19.	A	B			
20.			B		A
21.		A			B
22.		B			A
23.	A		B		
24.			B	A	
25.		B			A
26.	B				A
27.	B	A			
28.	A	B			
29.			B	A	
30.			A		B

Total number of items circled in each column: Highest score is your conflict resolution ability.

_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Competing	Collaborating	Compromising	Avoiding	Accommodating