## CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

Conflict is a part of life. People are being subjected to conflict both inside and outside the organisation. Conflicts arise due to limitation of resources, competition and difference in values, goals, attitudes, expectations etc. Whatever may be the cause, if conflicts are not managed well, they may adversely affect the mental health of the managers and also the health of the organisation.

An organisation consists of people with different backgrounds; as these individuals differ in their opinions and attitudes, interaction among them often leads to conflicts. Conflict, which can occur at individual, group or organisation levels, discourages people from cooperating with each other. While some degree of conflict is desirable in organisations so as to promote the spirit of competition among employees, it jeopardizes the effective functioning of the organisation if it is allowed to persist for a long time. Therefore it becomes essential to resolve conflicts quickly. Though there are several methods available to resolve conflicts, the ideal way is through negotiation. Thus, in order to be effective, it is important that the manager possesses adequate negotiation skills.

### Sources of Conflict

✓ **Organisation change:** Organisations undergo changes due to new technological political and social developments that affect them or due to change in the competitive forces. As people may hold different views about change and the future direction of an organisation, conflict may arise.

✓ **Personality clashes:** Individuals' personalities differ widely due to difference in their levels of maturity, emotional stability and their behaviour. When they do not recognize or appreciate these differences conflicts occur.

✓ **Difference in value sets:** Different people have different opinions, values and beliefs. When people with contradicting values and beliefs interact with each other conflict is likely to occur. These conflicts are often irrational and difficult to be resolved.

✓ **Threats to status:** Most individuals associate their identity with their status in society or the organisation. When an individual feels that another person's acts may harm or damage his image, which in turn may affect his status, conflict, is likely to arise.

✓ **Perceptual difference:** People perceive different things, issues and their environment differently. When they act as though their perception is the only reality, without attempting to understand or another person's view, conflict arise.

### 5 Stages of Organizational Conflict

✓ Latent Conflict,
✓ Perceived Conflict.
✓ Felt Conflict.
✓ Manifest Conflict.
✓ Conflict Aftermath.

### Latent Conflict

Latent conflict is the stage in which factors exist in the situation which could become potential conflict inducing forces.

✓ Competition for scarce resources
✓ Drive for autonomy

✓ Divergence of goals
✓ Role conflict

## Perceived Conflict

Conflicts may sometimes arise even if no conditions of latent conflict exist. This is the stage when one party perceives the other to be likely to thwart or frustrate his or her goals. The case, in which conflict is perceived when no latent conflict arises, is said to result from the parties misunderstanding each other's true position. Such conflict can be resolved by improving communication between the groups.

## Felt Conflict

Felt conflict is the stage when the conflict is not only perceived but actually felt and recognised. For example, A may be aware that he is in serious argument with B over some policy. But this may not make A tense or anxious and it may have no effect, whatsoever, on A's affection towards B. The personalization of conflict is the mechanism which causes many people to be concerned with dysfunctions of conflict. In other words, it makes them feel the conflict.

## Manifest Conflict

Manifest conflict is the stage when the two parties engage in behaviours which evoke responses from each other. The most obvious of these responses are open aggression, apathy, sabotage, withdrawal and perfect obedience to rules. Except for prison riots, political revolutions and extreme labour unrest, violence as a form of manifest conflict is rare. The motives towards violence may remain but they tend to be expressed in less violent forms.

## Conflict Aftermath

The aftermath of a conflict may have positive or negative repercussions for the organisation depending upon how the conflict is resolved. If the conflict is genuinely resolved to the satisfaction of all participants, the basis for a more cooperative relationship may be laid; or the participants in their drive for a more ordered relationship may focus on latent conflicts not previously perceived and dealt with.

On the other hand, if the conflict is merely suppressed but not resolved, the latent conditions of conflict may be aggravated and explode in a more serious form until they are rectified. This conflict episode is called 'conflict aftermath.' Conflict resolution has been added as an additional box in the figure to elucidate the conflict aftermath is a direct function of the results of the conflict resolution style adopted and exercised in any given situation.

## POWER AND POLITICS

Power is the ability to influence other people and events. It is the leader's stock-in-trade, the way that leaders extend their influence to others. It is somewhat different from authority, because authority is delegated by higher management. Power, on the other hand, is earned and gained by leaders on the basis of their personalities, activities, and the situations in which they operate.

**Distinction between Power and Authority:**

Normally the two terms 'power' and 'authority' are used as synonyms because they both influence the behaviour of people on whom these are exercised. But there is a clear distinction between these two terms. Power is the capacity to command or the ability to exercise influence whereas; authority is the right to command. Power is exercised by a person, whereas authority is derived from one's position in the organizational structure. The differences between authority and power are as follows:

- ✓ Power - Capacity to Command
- ✓ Authority - Right to Command
- ✓ Power - Exercised by a Person
- ✓ Authority - Derived form one's position

| Sl. No. | Authority | Power |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Legitimate | No such legitimate |
| 2 | One's position | Personal factors |
| 3 | Flows downwards | All directions |
| 4 | Increases when he moves up | Need not |
| 5 | Formal | May not exist between any two persons |

## TYPES OF POWER

Power develops in a number of ways. There are five bases of power, and each has a unique source.

**Personal power:** Personal power also called referent power, charismatic power, and power of personality-comes from each leader individually; it is the ability of leaders to develop followers from the strength of their own personalities. The leader senses the needs of people and promises success in reaching them. Well-known historical examples are Joan of arc in France, Mahatma Gandhi in India, Franklin D. Roosevelt in the United States.

**Legitimate Power:** Legitimate power, also known as position power and official power, comes from higher authority. It arises from the culture of society by which power is delegated legitimately from higher established authorities to others. People accept this power because they believe it is desirable and necessary to maintain order and discourage anarchy in a society.

**Expert power:** Expert power, also known as the authority of knowledge, comes from specialized learning. It is power that arises from a person's knowledge of that information about a complex situation. It depends on education, training, and experience, and so it is important type of power in our modern technological society.

**Reward power:** Reward power is the capacity to control and administer items that are valued by another. It arises from an individual's ability to give pay raises, recommend someone for promotion or transfer, or even make favourable work assignments. Reward power serves as the basis for behaviour modification programmes.

**Coercive power:** Coercive power is the capacity to punish another (or at least to create a perceived threat to do so). Managers with coercive power can threaten an employee's job security, make punitive changes in someone's work schedule, or (at the extreme) administer

physical force. Coercive power uses fear as a motivator, which can be powerful force in inducing action. However, it is likely to have an overall negative impact on the receiver. When one power base is removed from supervisors, employees may perceive that other basis of influence will decline as well. The use of a power base must fit its organizational context in order to be effective. Employees can respond in one of three ways, as shown in figure. They may resist the leader's initiative, especially if coercive power is used consistently, without apparent cause, or in an arrogant manner. They may comply with the leader's wishes by meeting minimal expectations while withholding extra effort. The most desirable outcome from wielding power is commitment, which is the enthusiastic release of energy and talent to satisfy the leader's requests.

## LEADERSHIP

- Definition: "The relationship in which one person, or leader, influences others to work together willingly on related tasks to attain that which the leader desires."

- Koontz & O' donnel: "The ability of a manager to induce subordinates to work with zeal and confidence."

## LEADERSHIP STYLES:

- **Autocratic leadership** - The autocratic leader gives orders which must be obeyed by the subordinates. He determines policies for the group without consulting them and does not give detailed information about future plans.

  - **STRICT AUTOCRAT** - who realizes on negative influences and gives orders which the subordinates must accept

  - **BENEVOLENT AUTOCRAT** - is effective in getting high productivity in many situations and he can develop effective human relationships

- **Participative leadership** - **A democratic leader is one who gives instructions only after consulting the group.** He sees to it that policies are worked out in group discussions and with the acceptance of the group. Participative manager decentralizes managerial authority

- **Free rein leadership or Laissez Faire Leadership** - **A free rein leader does not lead, but leaves the group entirely to itself**. **The free rein leader avoids power**. He depends largely upon the group to establish its own goals and work out its own problems

- **Paternalistic leadership** - In this style, the leader assumes that his function is paternal or fatherly. His attitude is that of treating the relationship between

the leader and his group as that of family with the leader as the head of family. He works to help, guide, protect, and keep his followers happily working together as members of a family