CONFLICT AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Introduction

- The concept of conflict , being an outcome of behaviors, is an integral part of human life. Where ever there is interaction, there is conflict.

- Conflict can be considered as an expression of hostility(unfriendliness or opposition), negative attitudes, antagonism, aggression, rivalry and misunderstanding.

Definition of Conflict

- According to professionals " Conflict is the appearance of difference , difference of opinions, of interests."

- Conflict' is:

(i) Antecedent conditions, for example: Scarcity of resources, policy differences among individuals, etc.,

(ii) Effective states of the individuals involved, for example: stress, tension, hostility, anxiety, etc.,

(iii) Cognitive states of individuals, i.e., their perception of awareness of conflict situations.

(iv) Changed behavior ranging from passive resistance to overt aggression.

- It is a process that begins when one party perceives that another party has negatively affected, or is about to negatively affect something that the first party cares about.

- Conflict is a psychological state of mind when people are in a dilemma whether to do or not to do a thing, is a state of conflict.

Nature of Conflict

- Conflict occurs when individuals are not able to choose among the available alternative courses of action.
- Conflict between two individuals implies that they have conflicting perception, values and goals.
- Conflict is a dynamic process as it indicates a series of events.
- Conflict must be perceived by the parties to it. If no one is aware of a conflict, then it is generally agree that no conflict exists.

Views on conflict

- **Traditional view:** The early approach to conflict assumed that all conflict was bad. Conflict was viewed negatively, and it was used synonymously with such terms as violence, destruction.

- **Human Relations view:** The human relations position argued that conflict was a natural occurrence in all groups and organizations. Since conflict was inevitable(which cannot be avoided) it is accepted and there are even times when conflict may benefit a group's performance.

- **Interactionist View(Modern View):** This view is based on the belief that conflict is not only a positive force in a group but is also necessary for a group to perform effectively. This approach encourages group leaders to maintain an ongoing minimum level of conflict – enough to keep the group viable, self-critical and creative.

Views on conflict

Traditional View

1. Conflict is avoidable.
2. Conflict is caused by management error in designing organizations or by trouble makers.

3. Conflict disrupts the organization and prevents optimal performance.

4. The task of the management is to eliminate conflict.

5. Optimal organizational performance the removal of conflict.

Current View

1. Conflict is inevitable.
2. Conflict arises from many causes, including organizational structure, unavoidable differences in goals, differences in perceptions and values of specialized personnel and so on.
3. Conflict contributes and detracts from organizational performance in varying degrees.
4. The task of the management is to manage the level of conflict and its resolution for optimal organizational performance.
5. Optimal organizational performance requires Requires a moderate level of conflict.

Types of conflict

- Functional – support the goals of the group and improves its performance.

- Dysfunctional – conflict that hinders group performance.

- The functional conflicts can be differentiated from the dysfunctional conflicts on the basis of the following three attributes:

(i) Task Conflict: Related to content and goals of the work.

(ii) Relationship Conflict: Focuses on interpersonal relationships.

(iii) Process Conflict: Process conflict relates to how the work gets done.

Positives and Negatives of Conflict

Positive

- Increased involvement
- Increased cohesion
- Innovation and creativity
- Personal growth and change
- Clarification of key issues
- Organizational vibrancy
- Individual and group identities

Negative

- Unresolved anger
- Personality clashes
- Less self-esteem
- Inefficiency
- Diversion of energy from work
- Psychological well being threatened
- Wastage of resources
- Negative climate
- Group cohesion disrupted.

- Latent Conflict (Stage 1): When two or more parties need each other to achieve desired objectives, there is potential for conflict. Latent Conflict often arises when change occurs. Conflict is likely to be caused by a budget cutback, a change in organizational direction, a change in personal goals or the assignment of a new project to an already overloaded team.

- Perceived Conflict (Stage 2): This is the stage at which members become aware of a problem. Incompatibility of needs is perceived and tension begins as the parties being to worry about what will happen. But no party feels that it is being overly threatened.

- Felt Conflict (Stage 3): At this stage parties become emotionally involved and begin to focus on differences of opinion and opposing interests. Internal tensions and frustration being to crystallize, and people begin to build and emotional commitment to their position.

- Manifest Conflict (Stage 4): At this stage parties engage in actions that help to achieve their own objectives and ruin those of others. Conflict behaviors vary from the subtle, indirect and highly controlled forms of interface to direct, aggressive, violent and uncontrolled struggle. At the organisational level strikes or lock-outs are the result.

- Conflict Outcome (Stage 5): The conflict finally results in an outcome which may be functional or dysfunctional. If handled well, the result is functional conflict. If mishandled, the consequences are dysfunctional conflict.

Conflict Resolution in Groups

- **Resolving Intra-Group Conflict :** Conflict with in a family can be resolved if the members recognize and respect roles of family members. All the members need to realise that dived they stand, united they fall. Probably a family friend may intervene to resolve the dispute if the members fail to resolve the conflict themselves.

Resolving Inter-Group Conflict: The approaches that are available for resolving inter-group conflict are as follows.

a. Problem-Solving

b. Avoidance

c. Smoothen

d. Compromise

e. Expansion of Resources

f. Organization Redesign

g. Superordinate goals

- **Problem-solving:** Problem-solving is considered to be the most effective approach available as it emphasizes the attainment of the common interests of both conflicting parties. In Problem-solving strategy, attempts are made to find a solution that integrates the needs of both parties. The two parties work together both to define the problem and to identify mutually satisfactory solutions.

- **Organization Redesign:** Changing organizational structure is another approach for resolving conflict, particularly when the sources of conflict come from the coordination of work among different departments or divisions. One way of redesigning organizations is to reduce task interdependence between groups and give each group clear responsibilities. Another way is to transfer or exchange of members of conflicting groups. An appeal system may also be developed to eliminate the arbitrary use of power.

- Superordinate Goals: Appealing to superordinate goals is another way of resolving conflict. The superordinate goal is a common goal of both conflicting parties and combined efforts of both parties will be needed to realize the goal. For example: Survival of the organization can be a superordinate goal. Creating an awareness that the organization's survival will be jeopardized [Put(someone or something) into a situation in which there is a danger of loss, harm, or failure.] if conflicting groups do not work in union and can have a salutary(Producing good effects) effect on disputing parties.

- Expansion of Resources: To the extent that scarce resources cause conflict, removing their scarcity will help resolve conflict. If upgradation of one's position has caused ripples elsewhere, some more jobs might be similarly upgraded. If increased budget allocation to one department has caused heart burn to the members of rival department, the rival division's allocation can also be correspondingly increased, and so on.

- Smoothen: The process of playing down the differences between individuals or groups and highlighting their common interests is called smoothening. Finding and emphasizing similarities between conflicting parties, while playing down differences, can eventually lead the parties to realize that the two are not as far apart as was first believed. With shared viewpoints on some issue, the ability to work towards a smoothen can help reduce the intensity of the conflict and avoid an escalation of open hostility. However, smoothen is recommended as a stop gap measure to let people cool down and regain perspective.

Key points to remember

- Be a model of calm and control

- Don't give in to emotional outbursts

- Don't assume people are being difficult intentionally

- Find a quiet place in to resolve conflicts….privately

Set some ground rules for the discussion:

- No raising of voices

- This is not a debate

- Speak only for yourself…"I" phrases

- Confront the issues, not the people

- Maintain or enhance self-esteem

Thank You