# CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STYLES

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**Abstract:**

A conflict is a disagreement between two or more parties (people/group). Within organizations, conflicts are inevitable. Conflict that occurs in an organization cannot be distinguished but can be prevented. The right tool to prevent conflict is by managing the conflict effectively. Effective conflict management will stop conflicts from spreading widely in an organization. Therefore, importance is given to conflict management; organizations must discover ways to effectively manage employees' conflict which will result in their employees' attitudes and behaviours to be excellent in order to deliver maximum work quality for the team and contribute towards organization's success. This article discusses the styles in handling conflicts among employees and the organisational commitment factor that influences them in selecting appropriate styles. This study has employed Thomas Kilmann mode instrument to identify styles in handling conflicts. By combining dual dimensions i.e. concern of self and concern for others, this instrument has introduced five styles in handling conflicts namely avoiding, dominating, obliging, compromising and integrating. Through this paper, we want to discuss the meaning of conflict in the organization, the conflict process and possible conflict management styles.

**Key Words:** *Conflict, Conflict process, Management styles, Organisational commitment.*

## Introduction:

Conflict is an inevitable fact for any organization. Conflict is a situation when two or more parties are in disagreement. A conflict usually occurs when two or more people communicate with each other. When people think of conflict in simple terms, they think that what happens when serious issues and anger is invoked in communication process. Conflict is misinterpreting one's words or values. Inappropriate, poor communicated information and selecting the wrong channel to transmit the information arise in the parties. Further conflict in an organization affects the commitment and absenteeism of employees. Thus Conflict appears to be an integral part of human functioning—it has manifested in diverse formats for millennia. Conflict that occurs in an organization cannot be distinguished but it can be prevented. The right tool to prevent conflict is by managing the conflict effectively. Effective conflict management will put a stop to conflict from spreading widely in an organization .Therefore, such importance will be given to conflict management; organizations must discover various ways to effectively manage employees' conflict which will result in their employees' attitudes and behaviors to be excellent in order to deliver maximum work quality for the team and towards organization's success.

## Concept of Conflict Management:-

The term conflict means different ways to different people because it occurs in different ratings and may take several forms. It may mean disagreement or hostility between individuals or groups in the organization; it may mean even rivalry or may be viewed as the perception of disagreement in the individuals. No doubt, conflict can be taken in several terms; most common form denotes disagreement, contradiction, and incompatibility. Based on these

The following definition of conflict appears to be more descriptive:-

"Conflict is a process in which an effort is purposefully made by one party to block another that results in frustrating the attainment of other's goals or the furthering of its interest".

## Based On The Above Definition, Some Basic Features Of Conflict Can Be Identified As Follows:-

1. Conflict is a process which suggests that it contains some activities leading to certain end results.
2. Conflict occurs when two or more parties pursue mutually exclusive goals, values, or events. Since these goals, values, or events are incompatible, these can be achieved by one party only at the cost of the other. Similarly, conflicting goals may also exist before an individual and he may face conflicting situation as he can pursue only one goal at the cost of the other.
3. Conflict refers to deliberate behavior, If interference occurs accidentally, there is no conflict. For example, if a party does not block the achievement of goals of others deliberately but it happens just by
4. the way, it does not amount to conflict because the first party does not try to meet his goals at the cost of the second party.
5. Conflict can exist either at latent or overt level, but generally speaking, conflict is a term that is limited to overt act, that is, some action has been taken by parties concerned to the conflict. Mere thinking of incompatible goals or values is not a conflict.
6. Conflict is different for competition. In conflict, one party sees an opportunity interfere the other's opportunity to acquire resources or perform activities. Competition, both parties may try to win but neither party actively interferes with other.

**Definition of conflict management:**

It is the process of limiting the negative aspects of conflict while increasing the positive aspects of conflict. The aim of conflict management is to enhance learning and group outcomes, including effectiveness or performance in an organisational setting properly managed conflict can improve group outcome.

*Objectives:*

1. To investigate the styles employees use in handling conflicts.
2. To examine the relationship between the styles used by the employees in handling conflicts and organisational commitment.
3. To acquire the knowledge of non violent skills to resolve conflicts.
4. To enable to control one's behaviour in conflict situation.
5. To identify common interests and achieve "win-win" solution.

*Conceptual framework on conflict Management styles:*

Robbins (1974) opines that management of conflict is to plan and then evaluate different levels of conflict" Management of conflict is a social process used people or groups thereof to tackle different conflict types so as to understand each other's grievances about their behaviors; conflict management is first a diagnostic process, interpersonal conflict i.e. between individuals, negotiating strategies, for the timely handling of conflicts so as to reduce its negative effects. Conflict management is an effective catalyst or motivating force for bringing changes in the organisation. That is the main reason for the superior or subordinate which approach is best for bringing a positive change in the organization and amicable change in the behaviors of the employees.

The term could be classified according to a myriad of independent variables, and this creates difficulty in formulating an operational and exact definition. Robbins believes that certain common denominators underlie most definitions, and that formal definitions should strive for broad flexibility. He accordingly develops the following definition; Conflict was regarded as dysfunctional and had to be avoided at all costs by role-players. The more modern approach originated in the discourses and precepts of the human relations theorists, who stipulated that conflict is a natural phenomenon, that it is inevitable and that it should be managed as such (Reynecke).

The paradigms of these theorists have become somewhat archaic—it is now generally accepted that conflict should be measured in terms of functionality, i.e., whether it manifests as functional and contributes to personal/organizational growth, or whether it is dysfunctional and impedes group/individual performance (Alper, Tjosvold, & Law, Cauldron, Neuper).It remains a fair assumption that if an individual experiences conflict as destructive and dysfunctional, subsequent behaviour will be adjusted correspondingly, and that such behaviour will impact negatively on the individual's wider sphere of influence (Womack). This assumption is supported by amongst others Reynecke as well as Song, Xie, and Dyer. Under such conditions, within organizational context, non-achievement of stated goals and non-performance then becomes both a feasible and logical consequence. The traditional triad of individual, group and organizational goals and objectives remains constant and in an inviolate relationship—this essentially purports that dysfunctional conflict between individuals will impact negatively on organizational performance. The veracity of this statement is alluded to by Zartman and Drolet and Morris.

Reyneck stipulates that organizations generally display an inability to manage conflict constructively—such organizations would primarily be centered in the traditional mindset of conflict (see above). Conflict within the framework of such organizations would in essence be regarded as a threat, and would impact on interpersonal relations and decision-making, which have a significant impact on the manner in which the organization functions.

The nature of the decision, which will have direct bearing and influence on the organizational outcomesor results. To summarize the focal points of the above theories: it is apparent that leadership behaviour is not a stable, static or dogmatic process. Rather, it is dynamic, incisive and directed, and is variable in terms of both subordinate and situation. The eventual end result of leadership behaviour (which incorporates interpersonal relationships and decision-making) materializes in organizational outcomes, such as organizational climate, job satisfaction and productivity.

# Types of Conflict:-

According to Flanagan and Ruden (2008), research over the past fifteen years has determined that there are two essential types of conflict in organizations: task conflict and relationship conflict. Task conflict concentrates on how to resolve problems caused by differences in viewpoints, ideas, experiences and opinions. Researchers have discovered that conflict will result in creativity and improved decision-making. It is another way to acknowledge conflict in a positive term.

The second type of conflict is known as relationship conflict. Examples of relationship conflict are disagreements about values, ethics , personal or family norms, or about personal taste. People refer to relationship conflict in negative terms. There is a reason why people always use negative words to describe conflict. This is because they are often involved in relationship conflict. Researchers have showed that relationship conflict results the productivity and motivation amongst team members. Insufficient communication amongst team members
 can lead to less choices and poor decisions. In addition, team members may simply agree to a decision without thinking of the impact and quality of implementation on conflict.

# Different Styles Of Conflict - Advantages And Disadvantages:-

According to Lussier (2010), each conflict style has advantages and disadvantages. The benefits and weaknesses of each conflict style are given as follows.

**Avoidance style –** The advantage of this style is use to maintain the relationship between managers and subordinates. The weakness of this style does not resolve conflict. Montoya-Weiss, Massey and Song (2001), found that using this style will hurt relationship of a team. People usually let the conflict be lessened while time goes on. In fact, avoiding the problem does not make it go away, but make it worse.

**Compromising style –**The advantage of this style is conflict can resolve with  in a short time while the relationship is still maintained. Weakness of this style is compromising styles usually starts to another results (Suboptimum decisions). If people overuse this style, it may cause the people being greedy and ask for several times to get achieve their desires.

**Collaborating style –** The advantage of using this style is make all parties happy with the final decision (Montoya-Weiss et al., 2001). On the other hand, due to letting all parties to be satisfying the final decision, it may use longer time and put in more effort than other styles.

**Forcing style –** The benefit of this style is enhanced organizational decisions will be choose if the forcer is correct rather than choosing a less effective decisions. The weakness of this style is aggressions and anger occurs toward its users. Research suggested that

forcing is a negative conflict management style that would decrease team performance and its effort towards the conflict. (Cohen & Bailey, 1997).

**Accommodating style –** Relationship is maintained by the users. The more effective ideas may not be used due to accommodating style. Misuse of this style may leads to lose of relationship that they try to maintain.

**Compromising style** – This involves a give-and-take situation in which both parties will give up something after negotiation in order to reach an agreement (Yuan, 2007). It will create I-win and I-lose section to create compromise. These people change their own opinion either because they found sufficient reasons to do so or simply to avoid continued confrontation (Lussier, 2010; Reich, Wagner-Westbrook, Kressel, 2007; Friedman, Tidd, Currall and Tsai, 2000).

**Collaborating style** – People who resolve the conflict with the best solution agreeable to all parties. It is commonly named as problem-solving style. They attend to the issue openly, frankly and neutrally by communicating with the other party (Flanagan and Runde, 2008). Previous study showed that, there is a significant positive relationship in using collaborating style and people's satisfying their task, their supervision and their job in general (Alexander, 1995).

**Forcing style** – People who use aggressive behaviour to solve the conflict. They force other people in order to achieve their goals. They use authorities, threats, and intimidate styles to force the parties agree with it (Lussier, 2010; Rahim and Bonoma, 1979).

**Accommodating style** – People who use interventions of other parties to resolve the conflict. These people are not assertive but cooperative (Yuan, 2007).
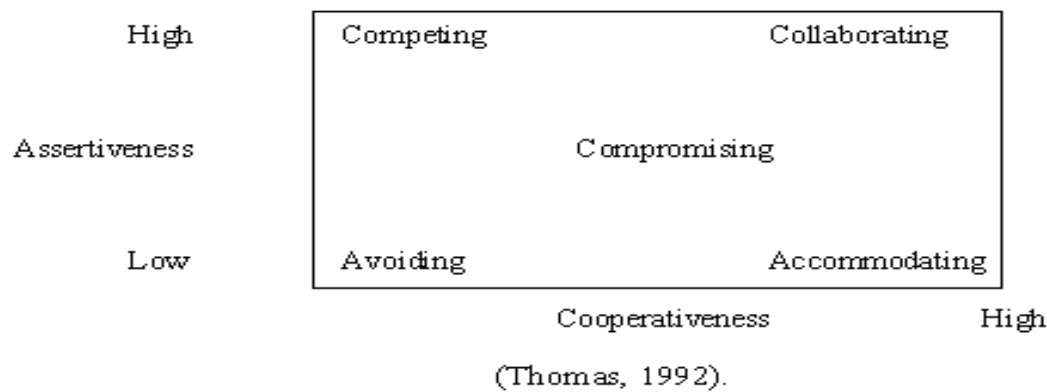


(Thomas, 1992).

Fig. 1. Conflict mode instrument.

## Different Ways Of People Deal With Conflict:-

According to Robinson (2010), Pruitt and Rubin (1986), there are several ways that people commonly use to resolve conflict.

**Passive-aggressive style** – People with passive-behaviour can be passive one minute and aggressive than the next second. They do and say things indirectly, act powerless to form hostility and then complain to others or act out in subversive ways, for example forget to bring important data to a meeting when it is promised (Katz and Kahn, 1996).

**Avoidance style** – People who always stay away from conflict. For example, they pretend that everything is okay to the point that if they are openly asked, ''Do you have any worry that you want to convey?'' they usually say, ''No''. People who favours the avoidance style tend to ignore conflict (Rahim, Antonioni and Psenicka, 2001). Avoidance style is prevalent in East Asian culture, Chinese cultures main concern in maintaining relationship. They usually use this style to maintain a harmony situation (Huan).

## Process of Conflict Resolution:-

Based on Robinson (2010), an effective team leader learns how to resolve the conflict by using the following eight stages to navigate with challenging interaction in senior team.
1. Develop ground rules;
2. Select a facilitator;
3. Uncover the details of the problem and its history;
4. Check the facts and clarify perceptions;
5. Focus on individual and shared needs;
6. Develop multiple options for solving the issue;
7. Develop doable next steps; and
8. Make mutual-beneficial agreements.

## Sources of conflict:

Robbins (1974) identifies three sources. Communicational (conflicts arising out of misunderstanding), structural ( role related in organizations) and personal ( stemming from individual differences) One of the early theorists on conflict, Daniel Katz in1965 created a typology that distinguishes three main sources of conflict economic, value, and power.

## Causes of conflict:

Unclear job roles, unresolved problems from the past demands, individual wants, and 'interests', increased workload , Personalities, Organization procedures and policies or lack of policies.

This paper discuss the various types of conflict management and its styles in the organisation, several studies have shown that when supervisors handle conflicts in a controlling way, the affective commitment of subordinates remains unchanged.

## Conclusion:

From the above point of views there are several types of conflicts that have been named by different authors, from their perspective. Consequences of unresolved conflict may affect job satisfaction and employee loyalty in any organization. Superior should mediate a conflict by using the right method. Sources of conflict leads to economic, value and power in a organisation. Conflict may affect employees. Commitment through the organization and increase the rate of absenteeism in workplace. In addition, there are several ways to deal with conflict, such as passive aggression, compromise, collaborating, accommodating and etc. Different styles of conflict management have its benefits and weaknesses, users have to identify the most appropriate conflict styles based on the different situation they are in. By following the conflict resolution procedure, conflicts will be solved easily. Conflicts serve as a learning curve for all organizations. Without conflict, an organization will not improve. Superior and subordinates should learn to resolve the conflicts that occur instead of just avoiding that conflict. Employees should learn and practice the various methods of conflict resolution. Superior and subordinates should start solving conflicts as it is the only way to ensure that conflicts are handled better in the future.

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