Organizational Conflicts: Causes, Effects and Remedies

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Abstract

This paper examines the causes, effects and remedies of organizational conflict. What are the things that lead to conflicts in organizations? The study found out that like other terms, conflict generates considerable ambivalence and leaves many scholars and administrators quite uncertain about (1) its meaning and relevance; and (2) how best to cope with it. Conflicts are inevitable in human life. It is also inevitable in organizations or even between nations. Conflict is an inseparable aspect of people's as well as organizations' life. The study also discovered that conflicts occur in organizations as a result of competition for supremacy, leadership style, scarcity of common resources, etc. If a conflict is not well and timely managed, it can lead to low productivity or service delivery. The study also discovered that conflict can sometimes produce positive result, if well managed. Thus, not all conflict situations are bad. Efforts should always be made to ensure that the causes of conflicts are addressed as soon as they are noticed. The paper concludes that early recognition and paying attention to the conflicting parties and negotiation between parties involved in the conflict should be adopted in resolving conflicts while force or intimidation should never be used to resolve conflicting parties. Force and intimidation can only be counter productive.

KEY WORDS: *Causes, Effects, Remedies, Organizational, Conflict, Concept.*

1.0   Introduction

The concept of conflict, because of its ubiquity and pervasive nature, has acquired a multitude of meanings and connotations, presenting us with nothing short of semantic jungle. Like other terms, conflict generates considerable ambivalence and leaves many scholars' and administrators quite uncertain about (1) its meaning and relevance; and (2) how best to cope with it. Conflict situations are inevitable in one's personal life, in organizations or even between nations. Conflict is a process in which one party suggests that its interests are being opposed by another party. As a rule, people see only the observable aspect of conflict – angry words, actions of opposition, etc. But this is only a small part of the conflict process (Mashanne and Glinow, 2008).

Conflict is an inseparable part of people's life. It is a perpetual gift of life, although varying views of it may be held. Some may view conflict as a negative situation which must be avoided at any cost. Others may see it as a phenomenon which necessitates management. Still, others may consider conflict as an exciting opportunity for personal growth and so try to use it to their best advantage. Wherever one may fall on this continuum of view points concerning conflict, seldom would one expect to be in a continual state of conflict as the basis for employment (Nebgen, 1978).

Conflict theory is significant to the role of the administrator, but it emanates primarily from fields such as business, sociology, psychology, etc.

According to Coser (1967), conflict is a struggle over values and claims to scarce status, power and resources in which the aims of the opponents are to neutralize, injure or eliminate the rivals. It is also defined from communication perspective as "an expressed struggle between at least two interdependent parties who perceive incompatible goals, scarce rewards and interference from other parties in achieving their goals (Hocker and Wilmot, 1985). According to Wikipedia, organizational conflict is a state of discord caused by the actual or perceived opposition of needs, values and interests between formal authority and power and those individuals and groups affected. There are disputes over how revenues should be divided, and how long and hard people should work. There are jurisdictional disagreements among individual departments and between unions and management. There are subtle forms of conflict involving rivalries, jealousies, personality clashes, role-definitions and struggles for power and favour. There is also conflict within individuals – between competing needs and demands – to which individuals respond in different ways.

Since conflict is seemingly unavoidable, it is obviously necessary for managers to be able to recognize the source of the conflict, to view it's constructive as well as destructive potential, to learn how to manage conflict and to implement conflict resolution technique in a practical way (Fleerwood, 1987). However, in the last 25 years, many scholars have changed their views concerning conflict. Conflict is now seen as having the potential for positive growth. Deetz and Stevenson (1986), list three assumptions that indicate that conflict can be positive. Their belief is that management of conflict serves as a more useful conception of the process of conflict resolution. Their assumptions are as follows:

  (a) conflict is natural;
  (b) conflict is good and necessary; and
  (c) most conflicts are based on real differences.

That conflict is good and necessary is suggested because conflict can stimulate innovative thinking when properly managed. Lacking conflicts, thought and action are performed because they are habitual. Conflicts allow an examination of necessity of these thoughts and actions. The third assumption points out that people are frequently timid in facing the reality that legitimated differences may exist and instead blame conflict on poor or non-existent communication. It may seem easier to live with unresolved misunderstanding than to face the fact that real, fundamental differences do exist and so demand recognition and management (Deetz and Stevenson, 1986).

However, conflict in organizations is a daily occurrence because a consensus of opinion concerning rules governing the organization seldom exists among staff and line employees.

They see one another as adversaries, and not as partners working towards a common goal as the case should be in the organization. There are potentials for conflict in practically every decision that the manger must make. Coping efficiently and effectively with potential and bonafide conflicts is possibly one of the most important aspects of the manager's position (Nebgen, 1978).

2.0 Review of Literature

2.1 Definition of Conflict

Conflict is very important for any manager. It is rooted primarily in the fields of business, sociology and psychology, but not in communication or education. It is complicated to define conflict as it is difficult to come to a consensus concerning the definition of this term (Borisoff and Victor, 1998). The easiest way to understand the term "conflict" is to divide theories of conflict into functional, situational and interactive. The followers of the functional approach think that a conflict serves a social function and those who view a conflict as situational, suggest that conflict is an expression under certain situations. The third theory views conflict as interactive. Functionalists usually ask the questions: "Why is there conflict? What purpose does it serve?" while situationalists ask: When do we have conflict? Under what circumstances does it occur?" Interactionalists are: "how is there conflict? what methods and mechanisms are used to express it?"

One of the representatives of the functionalist school was George Simmel, the German Sociologists. In 1955, he defined conflict as designed to resolve divergent dualisms; it is a way of achieving some kind of unity, even if it will be through the annihilation of one of the conflicting parties". According to Simmel, conflict served as a social purpose and reconciliation came even with the total destruction of one party. Conflict socializes members into a group and reduces the tension between group members. Furthermore, Simmel determines three possible ways to end a conflict. Firstly, conflict may end with a victory of one party over another; secondly, the conflict can be resolved through compromise; and thirdly, through conciliation. However, not all conflicts may be ended as discussed.

In 1967, Lewis Coser, an American sociologist and author of the *Functions of Social Conflict* gave the following definition of conflict: "The clash of values and interests, the tension between what is and what some groups feel ought to be." According to Coser (1967), conflict served the function of pushing society and was leading to new institutions, technology and economic systems. The most important contribution of Coser to conflict resolution was determination of the functional and dysfunctional roles of conflict.

A representative of the situationalist school, Bercovitch (1984), defines conflict as a "situation which generates incorruptible goals or values among different parties". For Bercvitch, conflict depends on the situation. Conflict arises because of different conditions, such as the influence of a person and external factors.

Concerning the interactive view, Folger (1993) defines conflict as "the interaction of interdependent people who perceive incompatible goals and interference from each other in achieving these goals". This approach introduces two important concepts: Interdependence and perception. Interdependence is connected to such situations where one party's future actions depend on another party's actions. Another concept was mentioned by Tillett (1991):

"Conflict does not only come about when values or needs are actually, objectively incompatibles, or when conflict is manifested in action; it exists when one of the parties perceives it to exist". Folger also sees conflict as coming from interdependent people (Tidwell, 1998).

Cross, Names and Beck (1979) define conflict as "differences between and among individuals. The differences are created by the conflict, for example, values, goals, motives, resources and ideas. Hocker and Wilmot (1985) define conflict as "an expressed struggle between at least two interdependent parties who perceive incompatible goals, scarce rewards and interference from the other party in achieving their goals" (Borisoff and Victor, 1998). Thomas (2005) defines conflict as a "disagreement in opinions between people or groups, due to differences in attitudes, beliefs, values or needs. In the business world, differences in such characteristics as work experience, personality, peer group, environment and situation, all lead to difference in personal attitudes, beliefs, values or needs".

From the above definitions, it is obvious that there is no just one practical definition of conflict. Each person has an individual way of thinking and behaves differently from others in similar situations. It can be concluded that conflict can affect everyone to varying extent (Leung, 2010).

2.2   Conceptual Framework
2.2.1   Conflict Theory

C.Wright Mills has been called the founder of modern conflict theory (Knapp, 1994). In Mill's view, social structures are created through conflict between people with differing interests and resources. Individuals and resources, in turn, are influenced by these structures and by the "unequal distribution of power and resources in the society". (Knapp, 1994). The power elites of the American society, (i.e., the military – industrial complex) "emerged from the fusion of the cooperate elite, the pentagon and the executive branch of government". Mills argues that the interests of these elites were opposed to those of the people. He theorized that the policies of the power elites would result in "increased escalation of conflict of weapons of mass destruction, and possibly the annihilation of human race" (Knapp, 1994).

A recent articulation of the conflict theory is found in Alan Sears (Canadian Sociologist) book: "A Guide to Theoretical Thinking" (2008). According to Sears' (2008):

- Societies are defined by inequality that produces conflict, rather than order and consensus. This conflict based on inequality can only be overcome through a fundamental transformation of the existing relations in the society, and is productive of new social relations.
- The disadvantaged have structural interests that run counter to the status quo, which, once they are assumed, will lead to social change. Thus, they are viewed as agents of change rather than objects one should feel sympathy for.
- Human potential (e.g., capacity for creativity) is suppressed by conditions of exploitation and oppression, which are necessary in any society with an equal division of labour. These and other qualities do not necessarily have to be stunted due to requirements of the so called "civilizing process" or "functional necessity". Creativity is actually an engine for economic development and change.

- The role of theory is in realizing human potential and transforming society, rather than maintaining the power structure. The opposite aim of theory would be objectivity and detachment associated with positivism, where theory is a neutral, explanatory tool.

2.2.2   Views On Conflict

There are various perceptions regarding conflicts. Conflict is a reality in everyone's life and should be considered a natural process that occurs daily. As a group performs its assigned tasks, conflict inevitably arises (Robins, et al, 2003).

Conflict is viewed as natural due to life's uncertainty. Conflict is good and necessary because it can stimulate innovative thinking when it is managed in the right way. Lacking conflict, thoughts and actions are performed because they are habitual. Conflict allows an examination of the necessity of these thoughts and actions. People find it easier to live with unresolved misunderstanding than facing the fact that fundamental differences do exist, and demand recognition and appropriate management (Deetz and Stevenson, 1986). Conflicts are an integral past of a human's life in all aspects. One cannot avoid conflicts in families, at work or even when watching the news on television (Viletta Bankovs Kay, 2012). Historically, the following views on conflict are identified:

2.2.2.1 Traditional View (1930-1940): One school of thought says that conflict must be avoided as it reflects malefaction within the group. Conflict is viewed negatively and is associated with violence and destruction. Conflict is a result of poor communication and a lack of trust between people. Conflict can be eliminated or resolved only at high level of management. According to this view, all conflicts should be avoided. Thus, there is need to pay attention to causes of conflict and correct them in order to improve group and organization performance (Robins, 2005). Most conflicts have negative connotations, invoke negative feelings and often lead to destruction. Whether the effect of conflict is good or bad depends on the strategies used to deal with it (Rahim, 1986).

2.2.2.2 The Human Relations Or Contemporary View **(**1940-1970): Conflict is a natural occurrence in all groups. The human relations school accepts conflict. It believes that conflict may benefit a group's performance (Robbins, 2005).   Dispute happens from time to time and it is not wise to put too much effort into avoiding or preventing the conflict. Concentrating only on large or critical conflicts allows people to resolve the conflict in a better and more effective way (Leung, 2010). According to this view, conflict is seen as a natural and inevitable outcome of people working together in groups and teams. Thus it needs not necessarily be viewed negatively, but rather positively as a potential force in contributing to the performance of individuals (Robbins, et al, 2003).

2.2.2.3 The Interactionist View: According to this view, conflict is not only a positive force, but is also necessary for an individual to perform effectively. Resolving conflicts means challenging normal processes and procedures in an effort to improve individual productivity or introduce innovative systems (Robbins, et al, 2003). Conflict is necessary to perform effectively, but not all conflicts are good. This school of thought has identified several types of conflict:
   - task conflict, relates to the content and goals of the work;

- relationship conflict, which focuses on interpersonal relationships; and
- process conflict, which relates to how the work gets done (Robbins, 2005).

The interactionists interpret conflict in a totally different way from traditionalists and people with a contemporary view. According to interactionists, conflict can be identified as either dysfunctional or functional. Conflict is a part of people's lives and a natural phenomenon in all organizations. A low level of conflict will not be harmful for daily operations but will help to create smooth functioning by better understanding of existing issues. Conflict at the desired level can inspire creativity when handling issues and resolving conflict. Thus, conflict can be positive in work environments, but whenever a critical or major conflict occurs, it should be resolved as the undesired level of conflict can be harmful and dysfunctional for the organization (Leung, 2010).

2.2.3 Forms/Classification Of Conflict

Different scholars have tried to classify conflict into various forms. The first classification is the relationship, task and process conflict. There is, however, considerable conceptual overlap between these different forms of conflict (Dirks and Parks, 2003).

(a) *Relationship Conflict:* This exists when there are interpersonal incompatibilities among group members, including personality clashes, tension, animosity and annoyance (Jehn, 1995). This type of conflict produces negative individual emotions, such as anxiety, mistrust, or resentment (Jehn, 1995), frustration, tension and fear of being rejected by other team members (Murmnigham and Conlon, 1991).

(b) *Task Conflicts:* These are disagreements about the content of a task and work goals, such as distribution of resources, procedures , and interpretation of facts (John, 1995; 1997). Task conflicts include differences in view points, ideas and opinions, and may coincide with animated discussions and personal excitement. In contrast to relationship conflict, findings concerning task conflict are not as conclusive. Task conflict has been associated with several beneficial effects such as improving the use of debate within a team (Jehn, et al, 1999), which results in quality ideas and innovation (Amason, 1996; West & Anderson, 1996) and leads to better service delivery (Tjosvold, Dann & Wong, 1992).

In addition, studies have shown that task conflict can also be associated with several harmful effects, such as job dissatisfaction, lack of team work (Kabanoff, 1991; Jenn, et al, 1997), and increased anxiety (Jehn, 1997)

(c) *Process Conflicts:* This refers to disagreement about how a task should be accomplished, individuals' responsibilities and delegation (Jehn & Mannix, 2001), e.g. when group members disagree about whose responsibility it is to complete a specific duty. Process conflict has been associated with lower morale, decreased productivity (Jehn, 1997) and poor team performance (Jehn, 1999).

Another form of classification or levels of conflict is as follows:

i.   interpersonal conflict;
ii.   interpersonal conflict /intra group conflict;
iii. inter group/Inter departmental conflict and
iv.   inter organizational conflict.

2.3   Types of Conflict

So far, it is quite evident that to say that conflict is all good or bad is inappropriate and naïve. Whether a conflict is good or bad depends on the type of conflict. Specifically, its necessary to differentiate between functional and dysfunctional conflicts (www.csupomona.edu).

2.3.1   Functional or Constructive Conflict**:** The interactionist view does not propose that all conflicts are good. Rather, some conflicts support the goals of the group and improve its performance; these are functional, constructive forms of conflict (www.csupomona. edu). Robbin (2001) defines functional conflict as the conflict that supports the goals of the group and improves its (group's) performance. The argument is that if conflict leads to normal competition among groups and the groups work harder and produce more, it is advantageous to the group and the institution. It is viewed as a confrontation between two ideas, goals and parties that improves employees and organizational performance (http://www.slideshare.net). One of the main benefits of constructive conflict is that it gives its members a chance to identify the problems and see the opportunities. Also, it can inspire to new ideas, learning, and growth among individuals (Kinicki and Kreitner, 2008).

2.3.2   Dysfunctional/Destructive Conflict: There are conflicts that hinder group performance; these are dysfunctional or destructive forms of conflict (www.csupomona.edu). Conflict is inevitable and desirable in organizations, but when not effectively handled, conflict can tear relationships apart and, thus, interfere with the exchange of ideas, information and resources in groups and between departments. Dysfunctional conflict hinders and prevents organizational goals from being achieved (http:??www.slideshare.net).

Dysfunctional conflict usually hinders organizational performance and leads to decreased productivity. This conflict orientation is characterized by competing individual interests overriding the overall interest of the business. Managers withhold information from one another. Employees sabotage others' work, either intentionally or through subtle, conflict-motivated disinterest in team work (Kinicki and Kreitner, 2008).
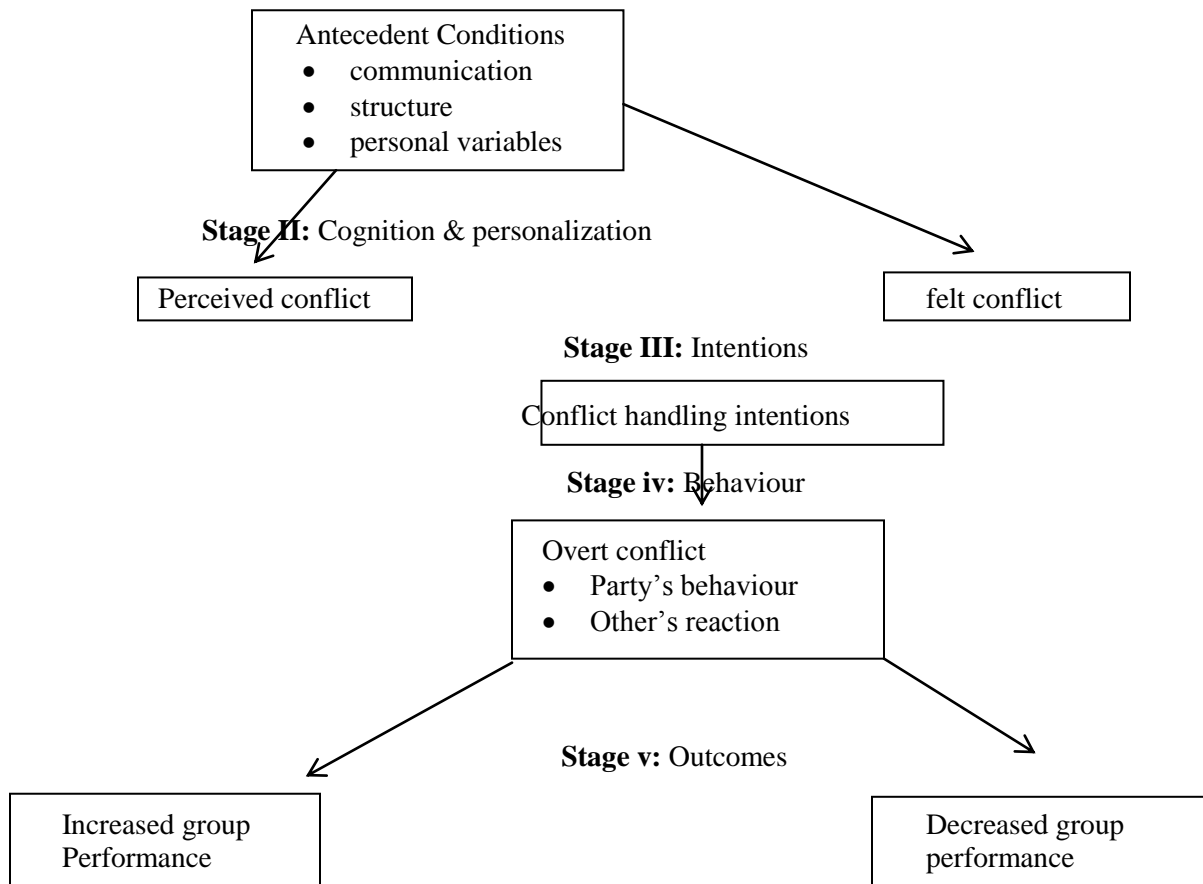
2.4   The Conflict Process

Conflict is a process in which one party suggests that its interest are being opposed by another party. As a role, people see only the observable part of conflict – angry words and actions of opposition. But this is only a small part of the conflict process (Mcshane and Glinow, 2008).

The conflict process consists of five stages:

    i.   potential opposition or incompatibility;
    ii.   cognition and personalization;
    iii.   Intentions;
    iv.   Behavior; and
    v.   Outcome.

Figure 1:

The Conflict Process

Stage I: Potential opposition or incompatibility

Antecedent Conditions
- communication
- structure
- personal variables

Stage II: Cognition & personalization

Perceived conflict

felt conflict

Stage III: Intentions

Conflict handling intentions

Stage iv: Behaviour

Overt conflict
- Party's behaviour
- Other's reaction

Stage v: Outcomes

Increased group
Performance

Decreased group
performance

Source: The Conflict Process (Robbins, 2005).

2.5   Sources Versus Causes of Conflict

It is important to differentiate between sources and causes of organizational conflict. While the former explains the place or nature with which or from which conflict emanates; (it explains the reason why conflict is endemic and inevitable), the latter explains these conditions that may warrant conflict to spring up and become an issue of concern. This is because conflict at its source may not necessarily become an issue of controversy, confrontation and concern of all but conflict which is caused (either intentionally or not) will no doubt bring about controversies and confrontations which may not necessarily surface in conflict at its source (http:// encyclopedia.efd.com).

2.5.1   Sources of Conflict

Fajana (2000), identifies two sources of conflict and they include:

(i) Internal Sources: This is so called because they refer to factors which are inherent within the framework of an organization. Fajana (2000) states that the major prime factor of internal sources of conflict is the "Opposing interests" of industrial actors. These "divergent interests" will bring about conflict in attempts by the two parties in organizations to try to share what Ajibade (2004) calls "industrial cake". Apart from the above, it is another statement of fact that there is usually "power relationship" between the two actors in an industry which no doubt produce conflict and make such inevitable (http://encyclopedia.tfd.com).

(ii) The External Sources: These are so called because they are outside the four walls of an organization. It may occur when the third party intervention to industrial dispute becomes one sided or biased. A good example is where government as the third and regulatory party tries to formulate policy or enact laws that favour one party at the detriment of the other. Such may generate conflict (http://encyclopedia/tfd.com).

2.5.2   Causes of Conflict
Conflict can occur as a result of structural or personal factors.

2.5.2.1   Structural Factors
(i)   Specialization. Employees tend to become specialists in a particular job or get a general knowledge of many tasks. If most employees in an organization are specialists, it can lead to conflicts because they have little knowledge of each other's job responsibilities. For instance, a receptionist at a camera repair store can say that a camera can be repaired in an hour, even though the repair will take a week. Since the receptionist does not know much about the technician's job she should not give an unrealistic deadline when the camera will be ready. This situation can lead to conflict between the receptionist and the technician (skiemman.is/en/category/view).

(ii)   Common Resources. In many work situations, we have to share resources. The scarcer the resource in the organization, the greater the chance for a conflict situation. Resource scarcity leads to a conflict because each person that needs the same resources necessarily undermines others who pursue their own goals.   Limited resources may include money, supplies, people or information.   For example, The Redmond Washington based Software Company may dominate several markets, but its staff members still disagree over limited resources (Mcshare & Glinow, 2008). Sartorial support computer time can contribute to conflict. Considering the company that installs a new computer for administrative and research purpose, at first, there is plenty of computer time and space for both uses. However, as both factions make more and more use of the computer, access becomes a problem, and conflict may erupt at this point.

(iii) Goal Differences. Very often, the possibility of conflict increases substantially when departments in the organization have different or incompatible goals. For instance, the goal of a computer salesperson is to sell many computers as fast as possible. The manufacturing facility may, however, be unable to meet the sales person's promises. In this case, conflict may occur as two persons have different goals (skemman.is/en/category/view).

(iv) Interdependence. The possibility of conflict usually has a tendency to increase with the level of task interdependence. When a person has to depend on someone else to complete his/her

task, it becomes easier to blame a co-worker when something goes wrong. As a rule, interdependence exists when team members must interest in the process of work and receive outcomes which depend on the performance of others (skemman.is/en/category/view).

(v) Authority Relationships. In many companies, there is an underlying tension between managers and employees because most people do not like being told what they have to do. In many organizations, managers have priviledges (flexible hours, free personal long-distance calls, and longer breaks). It is observed that very strict managers often have conflicts with their employees. Sometimes people try to engage in conflict to increase their power or status in an organization (skemman.is/em/category/view).

(vi) Roles and Expectations. A role is a behaviour that is expected from an employee. Every employee has one or more roles in the organization. These roles include such elements as job title, description of duties, and agreement between the employee and the organization. Manager– subordinate conflict can result when the subordinates role is not clearly determined and each party has a different understanding of that role (Whitlam & Cameron, 2012).

(vii) Jurisdictional Ambiguities. When the lines of responsibility in an organization are uncertain, then jurisdictional ambiguities appear. Employees have a tendency to pass unwanted responsibilities to another person when responsibilities are not clearly stated (skemman.is/en/ category/view). Ambiguous goals, jurisdictions, or performance criteria can lead to conflict. Under such ambiguity, the formal and informal rules that govern interaction break down. Ambiguous jurisdictions are often revealed when new programmes are introduced. This is a common occurrence in universities. Ambiguous performance criteria are a frequent cause of conflict between superiors and subordinates.

2.6   Effects of Conflict

Conflict may occur between two individuals, as in the case of superior versus subordinate, between heads of department, etc. Groups may be drawn into conflict with each other on the basis of performance, importance to particular groups and, in general, union – management rivalries. Conflict can also occur within an individual as in situations of dilemma of choice, vividly characterized by phrases such as "between the devil and the deep blue sea" or caught on the horns of dilemma. For example, a personel manager may be quite undecided about how to deal with a conflict (with workers, union) that is likely to result in work stoppage and loss of productivity.

The general assumption is that conflict tends to have negative consequences for both the individual and the organization. Below is a summarized list of the effect of conflicts in an individual:

1.   **Psychological Responses**
     - Inattentiveness to other things.
     - Lack of interest in work
     - Job dissatisfaction
     - Work anxiety
     - Estrangement or alienation from others
     - Frustration
2.   **Behavioural Responses**
     - Excessive smoking.

- Alcoholism
- Under eating or over eating
- Aggression towards others or work sabotage
- Decreased communication
- Resisting influence attempts.

3.   Physiological Responses:- These are often ignored or unnoticed: more and more adrenalin is shot into the blood which increases the heart beat and blood pressure while more hydrochloric acid is secreted into the stomach, leading to:

- Peptic ulcers
- Respiratory problems such as asthma
- Hypertension
- Headaches
- Coronary problems.

Hence it may be understood that conflict not only affects an individual's performance, but also gives rise to psychosomatic disturbances, which undermine the health of the individual. The progress so far made in our civilization is due to conflict between nature and man. Conflict releases energy at every level of human activity, energy that can produce positive, constructive results. Conflicts tend to have motivational values; they drive or energize an individual to tackle a situation.

To resolve a conflict, one might explore different avenues or alternatives of action, which make him/her more knowledgeable.

2.7   Benefits of Conflict

The benefits of conflict include the following:

➢ Motivates individuals to do better and work harder. One's talents and abilities come to the forefront in a conflict situation.
➢ Satisfies certain psychological needs like dominance, aggression, esteem and ego, and thereby provides an opportunity for constructive use and release of aggressive urges.
➢ Provides creative and innovative ideas. For example, employee benefits of the present day are an outcome of the union-management conflict over the past decades.
➢ Adds variety to one's organizational life, otherwise work life would be dull and boring.
➢ Facilitates an understanding of the problems, people have with one another and leads to better coordination among individuals and departments, in addition to strengthening intra-group relationship. (conflictall.com/guestconflictinorgs,htm).

Other positive effects include:-

➢ Inspire creativity:- fortunately, some organizations view conflict as an opportunity for finding creative solutions to problems. Conflict can inspire members to brainstorm, while examining problems from various perspectives.
➢ Share and Respect Opinions:- As organization members work together to solve conflict, they are more willing to share their opinions with other members of the

group. Conflict can also cause members to actively listen to each other as they work to accomplish the organizational goals.

> Improve future communication:- Conflict can bring group members together and help them learn more about each other. From learning each other's opinion on topics relevant to the organization's growth to understanding each member's preferred communication styles, conflict within an organization can give members the tools necessary to easily solve conflicts in the future (http://Ezine Articles.com).

The dysfunctional effects are:
> Conflicts affect individual and organizational performance. Resolving conflicts takes a toll on managerial time and energy which could be more productively spent.
> In a conflict situation, people may promote their self-interests or personal gains at the cost of others or the organization.
> Intense conflicts over a prolonged period affect individuals emotionally and physically, and give rise to psychosomatic disorders.
> Time spent on conflicts, if costed, could have been spent doing more productive things.
> Conflict may lead to work sabotage, employee morale problems, decline in the market share of product/service and consequent loss of productivity

2.8   Conflict Management and Resolution

As stated earlier, conflicts are inevitable in life, in organizations or even between nations. It however does have some noteworthy advantages, if handled correctly, as it brings problems out into the open and compels interested parties to find solutions that are acceptable to all. Unfortunately, conflicts that escalate out of control are detrimental to everybody in the equation. Thus, conflict management becomes a necessity (http://www.tutorials point.com.mgt).

Having the basic skills and knowledge, will go a long way in handling conflict admirably.

2.8.1   Steps in Managing Conflict
1.   Identify the conflict elements, emotions, behaviour and contradictions.
2.   Transformation:- changing the orientation of the conflict and making the different parties aware of the elements.
 3.   Solution:- changing the elements allows transformation of the conflict direction, which leads to the solution apparent

2.8.2   Conflict Resolution Values

Respect for All: From a conflict resolution perspective, conflicts can and must be resolved by taking into account the needs of the people affected by the conflict. In other words, for a solution to be lasting, it must meet the needs of all those involved in the conflict. A solution in which one party's needs are met at the expense of the needs of the other party, is neither just nor likely to last for a long time (Bodtker & Jameson, 2001; Kazan & Ergin, 1999).

Participation and Empowerment: Conflict resolution is based on the view that people have a right and an obligation to participate in decisions that affect their lives. As such conflict

resolution stresses that people are most likely to achieve their own goals and have rewarding relationships when they co-operate. In the same vein, society will be more productive. This means that when in conflict, people should consider each other as allies in helping to create a solution to a common problem rather than enemies who are to be defeated (Hughes, 1993).

Respect for Diversity in Views and Perspective: One of the fundamental tenets of conflict resolution is that the parties in the conflict need to respect and understand each other's needs and perspectives. This is not only understanding and respecting people that you agree with, but also attempting to understand and respect people that you disagree with, and respecting their right to disagree (Kazan & Ergin, 1999; Bodtker & Jameson, 2001).

Justice: Most people practicing and writing about conflict resolution agree that it is necessary that solutions are just and fair. In conflict justice can be of two kinds: procedural and substantive. Procedural justice means that the procedure for dealing with conflict is fair. Conflict resolution techniques are very useful in ensuring procedure justice, such as ensuring that all the parties affected by the conflict are present. Substantive justice amounts to ensuring that the solutions produced are fair. This, however, is more theoretical than practical. For instance, if parties in mediation agree to what the mediator believes is an unjust solution, there is very little the mediator can do to facilitate a more just outcome (Cambodia – World Bank, 2005).

Rahim, et all (2000) argue that justice is one of the most important concerns for employees in organizations. Justice and fairness encourages positive attitudes and facilitates conflict management. Rahim, et al (2000), therefore, present the following hypothesis that was supported in the research:

Employees' perception of organizational justice will be positively associated with their use of the more cooperative (integrating, obliging and compromising) styles of managing conflict with their supervisors (Rahim, et al, 2000).

Non-Violence: Conflict resolution promotes the use of non-violence techniques wherever possible. Based on the argument that violence is generally unethical and ineffective, conflict resolution techniques seek to highlight and create non-violent options for dealing with conflict. While acknowledging that the use of force cannot always be avoided, it is argued from a conflict resolution perspective that by increasing the acceptance of non-violent methods for dealing with conflict and training people in these skills, a great proportion of conflict can be more effectively addressed without violence (Galturg, 1996).

Transformation of Individuals and their Communities: Changing the way we deal with conflict helps us live a more rewarding and responsible life. Changing oneself is also an essential part of creating community change, as one is providing positive role models for others, and taking responsibility of the role one plays as part of one's own community. However, for community change, we also need to be proactive and consider other ways to influence the communities such as through conflict resolution training and direct intervention (Bodtker & Jameson, 2001). According to Rubin & Sung (1994), once conflict escalates, it often reaches a stalemate, a situation in which neither side can win but neither side wants to back out or accept loss either.

2.8.3 Conflict Resolution

There is a difference between resolving a conflict and managing conflict. Resolving a conflict ends the dispute by satisfying the interests of both parties. Managing a conflict contains

specialized interaction that prevents a dispute from becoming a battle. Managing a conflict attends to personal issues so as to allow for a constructive relationship, even though the objective issues may not be resolvable (http: // Ezine Articles. Com).

Conflict resolution requires great managerial skills. Acre we are trying to give a solution to a conflict turning it in a constructive side. Our goal in conflict resolution always should be to seek a resolution based on mutual gain. Realistically, however, resolution is not always possible. When this is the case, we must manage the conflict to ensure that the relationship is constructive and that open communication is maintained.

Successful conflict resolution depends on the ability to regulate stress and emotions. During conflict, strong emotions appear which can hurt feelings. When conflict is handled in an unhealthy way, it can be the cause of irreparable rifts, resentments, and break-ups. When a person deals with a conflict in a healthy way, it increases the understanding among people, builds trust and strengthens relationships

It is believed that the ability to resolve conflicts successfully depends on the ability to:

- manage stress quickly by staying calm. In this way a person can properly read and interpret verbal and non-verbal communication;
- control emotions and behaviour. When a person can control his emotions it is simpler to communicate the needs without threatening, fighting or punishing others;
- pay attention to the feelings and works of other people; and
- be aware of and respectful of differences by avoiding disrespectful words. In this way problems can be resolved faster (Segel & Smith, 2011).

2.8.4 Conflict Resolution Skills

1. Quick Stress Relief: Stress is an individual's adaptive response to a situation which is challenging or threatening. The researcher, Han Segal, found out that people have a fairly consistent psychological response to stressful situations. This response was called "general adaptation syndrome". It provides an autonomic defense system which helps to cope with environmental demands.

2. Emotional Awareness: Emotional awareness is very useful for understanding yourself and others. If a person doesn't know how he feels in a certain way, he/she will not have effective and productive communication.

3. Non-Verbal Communication: Non-Verbal communication plays a big role in conflict resolution as during the conflict process the most important information is exchanged in a non-verbal way. The elements of non-verbal communication are emotionally-driven facial expressions, posture, gesture, pace tone and intensity of voice. The most important communication is wordless because sometimes words cannot reflect all the issues. In the middle of a conflict it is useful to pay attention to the other person's non-verbal signals. It may help to figure out what the other party is really saying and to respond in the right way to build trust, and get to the root of the problem (Segel and Smith, 2011).

2.8.5 Conflict Management/Resolution Styles

Dealing with conflict between and among individuals can be one of the most frustrating and uncomfortable experiences for an administrator. Any attempt by an administrator to alter a

specific conflict position requires that he/she be knowledgeable of its origin. An understanding of the source improves the probability that the proper resolution or stimulation technique will be selected (Robbins, 1974).

De Church, et al (2001). express that active conflict management allows groups to openly talk about issues and disagreements, allowing them to share information and confront a conflict together. In addition, Tjosvold, et al (2002). argues that openness makes it possible to contradict arguments. Research has shown that there are great possibilities in open conversation and argument confrontation. The positive effects of conflict management are, according to De Church, et al (2001), a result of the active approach which benefits team effectiveness.

The most important element of the conflict management strategy is the early recognition of the conflict and paying attention to the conflicting parties. These elements are important when a manager deals with functional or dysfunctional conflicts. There should be early indication of the conflict and early evaluation of its impact on performance of employees. It is also necessary to make a plan to encourage functional conflict or manage dysfunctional conflict (skemman.islien/category/view). The approach to the conflict and the conflict management style also depend on the participant's emotional involvement in the conflict (Brodtker, et al, 2001).

Brodtker et al (2001). argue that conflict is formed by three major elements:
- ❖ Attitudes: cognitive ideas and emotion;
- ❖ Behaviour: evident behaviour and potential aggressive actions; and
- ❖ Contradiction: values and interests.

Brodtker, et al (2001), argue further that for a conflict to take place, these three elements must be present. Moreover, to resolve a conflict, one must identify and deal with all these elements, otherwise the attempt to manage the conflict will be unsuccessful.

Conflict can be either complex or simple. The more complex a conflict is, the more the potential for a creative, constructive transformation or solution of the conflict. If the conflict is too simple, the parties will not be motivated to get engaged and they will tend to ignore it. This can lead to greater problems in the organization which can in turn, lead to poor performance. When there are more elements, the conflict becomes too complicated to manage. Darling and Fogliasso (1999) conclude that it is impossible to eliminate conflict totally. Managers who try to eliminate conflict will not last, while those who manage it well typically experience both institutional benefit and personal satisfaction.

2.8.6 The Framework For Conflict Resolution

When conflicts arise, we assess a variety of factors before selecting our approach to the situation. We may chose to compete, or dominate, when we try to impose our will on the other side through physical or psychological means, or we may choose to accommodate or surrender and code victory to the otherside. Likewise, we may decide to withdraw by either doing nothing or refusing to participate in the conflict altogether, or we may even collaborate and reach a constructive and mutually acceptable solution. If none of these approaches proves effective, we might choose third-party intervention; a form of collaboration in which an individual or

group external to the conflict intercedes to move both parties toward agreement (http:// Ezine Articles.com).

2.9 Mistakes To Avoid In Conflict Resolution

Good communication can strengthen relationships and develop trust and support while poor communication can create mistrust and misunderstanding. Some negative attitude and communication patterns that worsen the conflict situation in relationships include:

(a) Avoiding Conflict Altogether: Rather than discussing disagreements in a calm, respectful way, some people just do not say anything to their partner until they are ready to explode and then they are ready to speak in an angry hurtful manner. This seems to be the less stressful to avoid the conflict situation but usually it causes more stress to both parties as tensions rise to a greater conflict.

(b) Being Defensive. Rather than understanding the complaints of a partner and his/her point of view, defensive people steadfastly deny their wrong behaviour and work hard to avoid looking at the possibility that they could continue to contribute to a problem. It creates long-term problems when partners do not feel listened to and understood. In this case, unresolved conflicts continue to grow.

(c) Over Generalizing. While addressing complaints, a person should not use generalizations. For example, he/she should avoid starting sentences with "you always", "you never", "you always come home late" or "you never do what I want you to do!" It is irritating to the other person. Bringing up past conflicts can increase the level of current conflict.

(d) Being right: Some people decide the "right" way to look at things and the "wrong" way to look at things and they are sure that only their view on things is right. It is necessary not to demand that your partner see things the same way and don't take it as a personal attack if there are differences in opinion. It is important to reach compromise and remember that two points of view can both be valid.

(e) "Psycho Analysing" / Mind – Reading Sometimes people think negative about a partner because they give faulty interpretations of their actions. They do this because they do not think about the thoughts and feelings of the partner and it creates hostility and misunderstandings. It is important to let the other person express his/her thoughts and feelings.

(f) Forgetting To Listen. Some people are not good listeners: they interrupt, roll their eyes and release whatever they are going to say next. People should develop listening skills to strengthen the communication process.

(g) Playing The Blame Game. Some people in conflict situations always criticize the other person. They always find ways or embarrassing others Instead of blaming the other person it is necessary to view conflict as an opportunity to analyse the situation objectively and understand the needs of both parties and come up with a solution that is helpful to both parties.

(h) Trying To "Win" The Argument. People who are focused on "winning" the argument can lose the relationship. There should be mutual understanding and respect for everyone. People should be able to reach an agreement amicably.

(i) Making Character Attacks. Sometimes negative actions from a person can be blown up into a personality flow. This can lead to negative perceptions on both sides. It is important to respect the person even if he/she has bad behaviour.

(j) Stone Walling. Some people behave like "stone wall" and refuse to talk or listen to their partners when disagreements occur. Stonewalling does not solve the problem, but creates hard feelings and damages relationships. It is much better to talk about problems together with a partner and listen to and discuss things in a respectful manner (Scott, 2011).

3.0   Conclusion

From the discussion thus far, it is quite evident that conflicts occur in organizations as a result of competition for supremacy, leadership style, scarcity of common resources, etc., This reduces staff satisfaction about the job and also reduces productivity or service rendered. Thus, early recognition of the conflict and paying attention to the conflicting parties is very important. Negotiation between parties involved is the best way to resolve conflict while force should not be used at all.

Darling and Fogliasso (1999). conclude that it is impossible to eliminate conflict totally. Mangers who try to eliminate conflict will not last long, while those who manage it well will typically experience both institutional benefits and personal satisfaction.

4.0   Recommendations

Arising from the findings and conclusion of this study, the following are herewith recommended for organizations:

(i)   organizations should make adequate room for decision making;

(ii) for proper running and optimum productivity, staff welfare should be taken into consideration;

(iii) to avoid rumour mongering organizations should evolve a proper system of information dissemination to all and sundry;

(iv) managers should learn to practice delegation of authority to members of staff in the lower cadre;

(v) participatory, rather than autocratic style of management, should be encouraged by organizations;

(vi) there should be adequate interaction and dialogue in conflict resolution;

(vii)   competition for supremacy should not be the priority of the staff of organizations but rather working together in peace and unity to achieve a common goal for the good of the organizations; and

(viii)   Training workshops should be organized for staff of organizations on conflict resolution procedure.

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