

STUDYING CONFLICT MANAGEMENT IN THE PERSPECTIVE OF ORGANIZATION

Dr. Shafique Rehman
Deputy Director, SAI Pakistan



Conflict management is serious disagreement between the peoples and parties within the organization due to divergent background of peoples, ideologies, culture and perceptions .It is also psychological state of dilemma in which one party perceives that it is being negatively affected by the actions of another party.Moreover,organization is an association of persons working together for achieving common goals and objectives The word conflict is derived from Latin word “conflictus” which means to “strike hard”. Conflicts are common within public and private organizations. Conflicts are common at workplaces due to variation in human nature. Conflicts are natural, universal and inevitable within the organizations due to difference of human nature How to solve conflicts effectively and timely within the organization is the subject of conflict management. This is the core responsibility of management and leadership within the organization. Conflicts have tendency to cause negative disruption if not handled properly within the organization. The subject of conflict management comes under the jurisdiction of organizational behavior

Impacts of conflict

Conflicts tend to have both positive as well as negative impacts. Positive impacts include overall enhanced group performance

resulting in better performance of organization. Moreover, working environment and relationship among team members is improved due to exploration of issue and simultaneous solution. Unresolved conflict has the price to be paid by the organization. Leadership becomes task oriented and serious in solution of problems. Poor performance of organization, anxiety, demotivation, depression and frustration among members are the end results of negative impacts of conflict within the organization.

Conflict and role of management within organization

Conflicts tend to arise frequently among the employees in large organizations, companies and departments and timely solution of issues is the prime responsibility of persons at the helm of affairs. Effective solution of issues within the organization is mandatory for improved performance and achievement of organizational goals .Therefore, it is core duty of bosses and managers to timely intervene for solution of problems between peoples and groups in an organization in order to enhance its output. Effective leader within an organization is always proactive to prevent the occurrence of conflict. Remaining in state of denial and not taking essential measures to prevent and deal conflict may lead to adverse



consequences within the organization resulting in poor performance and decreased output which may become liability for managers. Study of conflict management subject is essential for managers as it is useful tool to boost the skills of managers to manage organization effectively.

Views of conflict management

Traditional view lays stress upon avoidance of avoidance conflict and says it is essentially harmful for organization. Human relation view entails that conflict among humans is natural and unavoidable. Interactions view believes that conflict is positive force and leads to better performance within organization.

Reasons of conflict within the organization

There is always possibility of clash of interests between conflicting parties within the organization. Moreover, miscommunication and misinterpretation between the persons, groups and parties in an organization always lead to conflict. Further, Lopsided organizational structure, expression of authority by few individuals within the organization is the other reasons leading to conflict in the organization. Moreover, incompatibility of goals, clash of interests between individuals and variation in personal values of persons tend to enhance the gravity of conflict. Further, limited resources within the organization lead towards fight and competition among the individuals within the organization. The culture of favoritism in organization and discouraging the system of merit, too, create favorable ground for friction, misconceptions and conflicts between the individuals within the

organization. Over expectations of either boss from employees or vice versa is also the reason of conflict and clash within the organization.

Types of conflict

Conflicts have various types. Interpersonal conflict is the reason of frustration, stress and anxiety within an individual. This results in decreased productivity of employee and adversely affecting the organization. Interpersonal conflict, more common within an organization, is due to clash between two employees negatively affecting organization, if remains chronic is quite dangerous for organization. Role conflict is also common when single individual is entrusted with multiple tasks simultaneously which becomes difficult for him to perform effectively, efficiently resulting in stress, anxiety and depression for employee. Role conflict is quite common in public organizations. Goal conflict is the one when goal is not achieved resulting in distress in an individual. External conflict is due to adverse atmosphere and surroundings. Relationship conflict is quite common among life partners.

Stages of conflict Latent stage

In this stage, participants and top management of organization are unaware of conflict. Conflicting goals, fight for scarce resources within organization tend to become breeding grounds for conflict. If the situation is not properly handled at this stage, it leads to perceived stage.

Perceived stage

Warring parties become aware of conflict. Sometimes, latent stage is missing in the conflicts and clash is directly converted into perceived stage which becomes first stage of conflict directly. In this stage, communication between the warring parties becomes minimized

Felt stage

In this stage, conflict is perceived and cognized. Personalization of conflict occurs resulting in psychological stress and anxiety between warring parties within the organization

Manifest stage

At this stage, conflict becomes wide open. Behaviour of peoples, parties and groups within the organization become violent and aggressive .All within and outside organization can witness the conflict. The parties continue to degrade each other. Subsequently, apathy, sabotage activities become common within the organization which can be evident in this stage.

Aftermath stage

This is the last stage of conflict which may either result in functional conflict resulting in enhanced performance of organization or dysfunctional conflict resulting in poor performance of organization.

General guidelines for conflict management within the organization

Ask for negotiations, talks and dialogue between warring parties and this is the responsibility of management within the organization. Timely intervention by management is essential to promote and protect the interests of organization. Call to moderator or neutral party is also essential for de-escalation between the battling parties. If the conflict is within organization, clashing persons should be called in person privately to hear their viewpoint and then they should be made to sit together by bosses so that reconciliation is made .Followup after rapprochement should also be made so that future conflict between the parties be prevented and avoided. Expansion of resources within organization is ensured by management so that interests of aggrieved party are protected. Moderator and neutral party making rapprochement has the responsibility to remain calm, composed and considerate and must be in possession of set of strong communication skills. Besides, warring parties should have empathy for each other .Moderators should use soft tone , talk with logic, reason and de-emotionalize themselves while defusing the situation. The moderators should always concentrate on problem solving rather than on person and should search for common interests and grounds among conflicting parties.

Techniques of dealing with conflict management

Avoidance

Avoidance is the first technique to deal and manage conflict. Warring parties and persons tend to stay away from the problem. This policy is not suitable for long term and detrimental to the interests of organization. Issues or problems tend to get exacerbate in its intensity due to negligence on the part of fighting parties .Things are left on their own to take difficult shape in the future course. In this technique, unassertive behavior is displayed by fighting parties. It is absolutely wrong to use this technique in large-scalewars.

Competing

Conflicting parties tend to fight and compete with each other displaying use of force to achieve their specific interests. Direct and indirect aggression is displayed by both parties. This is selfish approach if pursued by parties which results in negative consequences for organization. In this technique, assertive behavior is displayed by both parties for achieving their goals.

Compromising

Conflicting parties leave settled positions .This is either win-win or lose-lose situation

for both parties. Compromise is considered to be positive technique and leads towards achievement of organizational goals. It looks like deal has stricken between the parties.

Collaborating

Both parties display great concern for each other during the course of conflict. Both parties search for common grounds and solutions which are acceptable to all.

Forcing

One party displays power and bullying tactics to other party. One party imposes authority over the other. Force is displayed by one party as tactic to intimidate the other party.

Conclusion

Conflict is common at workplace within the organizations. Constructive conflict results in growth of organization. Whereas, destructive conflict results in stagnation of organization. Therefore, the role of managers is absolutely vital in handling and managing the conflict. Effective management of conflict within no time is essential for achieving the organizational goals.