CONFLICT MANAGEMENT AT WORKPLACE-ITS STYLES & CAUSES

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Abstract
This article reviews the conflict literature, first examining the styles, causes of conflict and its strategies to avoid workplace conflict. Conflict can be managed by the disputants themselves, by managers, or by other third parties. Conflict is a situation when two or more parties are in disagreement. Unresolved conflict can negatively impact the success of an organization Conflict may affect employees' commitment through the organization and increase the rate of absenteeism in workplace 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.

Key Words: Conflict Management, Styles.

Introduction
Conflict Management is the practice of being able Conflict is a fact of life in any organisations as longer as people compete for jobs, resources, power, recognition and security. In addition, dealing with conflicts is a great challenge to management (Adomi and Anie, 2005). Conflicts commonly arise when employees interact in organisations and compete for scarce resources. Employees in various organisations are organized into manageable groups in order to achieve common goal, therefore, the probability of conflicts to arise is very high. Nowadays, most serious conflicts make headlines in the newspapers, which might affect the public image of the company. Conflicts have both negative and positive outcomes to the individual employees and the organization at large. There is no one source of conflicts which occurs in organisations at all levels of management (Barker *et al*., 1987). In social life, conflicts do occur but they are managed by family members, friends and relatives. The same case applies to organisations, when conflicts arise; it needs to be resolved by management for the sake of the organisational growth, survival and enhance performance. However, conflicts are rarely resolved easily, to a certain extend most conflicts are managed, as individuals work out differences (Barker *et al*., 1987). Conflict can occur within groups (intra-group conflict) or among groups (inter-group conflicte to identify and handle conflicts sensibly, fairly, and efficiently. Since conflicts in a business are a natural part of the workplace, it is important that there are people who understand conflicts and know how to resolve them. This is important in today's market more than ever. Everyone is striving to show how valuable they are to the company they work for and at times, this can lead to disputes with other members of the team.

Objectives
- To study the conflict management styles of the people in organisation.
- To study the causes &strategies to avoid conflict.

Conflict Management Styles
Conflicts happen. How an employee responds and resolves conflict will limit or enable that employee's success. Here are five conflict styles that a manager will follow according to Kenneth W. Thomas and Ralph H. Kilmann:

An **accommodating** manager is one who cooperates to a high degree. This may be at the manager's own expense and actually work against that manager's own goals, objectives, and desired outcomes. This approach is effective when the other person is the expert or has a better solution.

Avoiding an issue is one way a manager might attempt to resolve conflict. This type of conflict style does not help the other staff members reach their goals and does not help the manager who is avoiding the issue and cannot assertively pursue his or her own goals. However, this works well when the issue is trivial or when the manager has no chance of winning.

Collaborating managers become partners or pair up with each other to achieve both of their goals in this style. This is how managers break free of the win-lose paradigm and seek the win-win. This can be effective for complex scenarios where managers need to find a novel solution.

Competing: This is the win-lose approach. A manager is acting in a very assertive way to achieve his or her own goals without seeking to cooperate with other employees, and it may be at the expense of those other employees. This approach may be appropriate for emergencies when time is of the essence.

Research Paper
Impact Factor: 3.567
Peer Reviewed Journal

IJMDRR
E- ISSN –2395-1885
ISSN -2395-1877

Compromising: This is the lose-lose scenario where neither person nor manager really achieves what they want. This requires a moderate level of assertiveness and cooperation. It may be appropriate for scenarios where you need a temporary solution or where both sides have equally important goals.

Causes of Workplace Conflict

Poor Communication

Poor communication is one of the main causes of conflict between employees in the workplace. This can result in a difference in communication styles or a failure to communicate. For example, a manager reassigned an employee's task to the employee's co-worker but failed to communicate the reassignment to the employee. This may cause the employee to feel slighted, which can transform into animosity among the two employees and the manager. Failing to communicate in the workplace may cause employees to make incorrect assumptions and believe workplace gossip. Poor communication in the workplace not only causes conflict but decreases productivity and employee morale.

Difference in Personalities

A difference in personalities among employees is another cause of workplace conflict. Employees come from different backgrounds and experiences, which play a role in shaping their personalities. When employees fail to understand or accept the differences in each other's personalities, problems arise in the workplace. For example, an employee may possess a straightforward personality that results in him speaking whatever is on his mind, even if the timing is inappropriate. The employee with the straightforward personality may offend a co-worker that does not possess the same type of personality. The co-worker may feel as if the employee is rude or lacks the authority to deal with him/her in such a straightforward manner.

Different Values

Similar to personalities, the values of employees differ within the workplace. A difference in values is seen clearly when a generational gap is present. Young workers may possess different workplace values than older workers. The difference in values is not necessarily the cause of employee conflict in the workplace, but the failure to accept the differences is. When employees fail to accept the differences, co-workers may insult each other's character and experiences. When insults occur, the conflict intensifies until the right solution is offered and accepted.

Competition

Unhealthy workplace competition is a cause of employee conflict. Some industries foster competitive environments more than others. When salary is linked to employee production, a workplace may experience strong competition between employees. Competition that is not properly managed can result in employees sabotaging or insulting one another, which creates a hostile work environment. Unhealthy workplace competition discourages teamwork and promotes individualism

Strategies to Avoid Conflicts at the Workplace

Every individual has his own style of working and reacting to any particular situation. Problems are bound to come when individuals work together. **Never leave any problem unattended as a small problem can eventually become a major reason to worry later on**. The problems must be addressed on an open platform and all related employees must be invited. Never discuss any problem separately with individuals as the other person might feel neglected. Prefer a conference room or the board room to discuss the problems and find a solution to it. Never always depend on verbal communications. **Official communications must be preferably through emails marking a CC to all the participants as it is more reliable and transparent**.

Transparency must be maintained at all levels and superiors must be easily available to the subordinates to avoid confusions. Gossips and backbitings must be avoided at workplace as it is considered seriously unprofessional and lead to conflicts among individuals. Be straight forward and learn to express your views in a convincing way. Never be partial at workplaces. Do not support anyone just because he is a friend. Support him if he is right and do correct him if he is wrong. Understand the other individual as well. Don't just impose your ideas on others, instead consider their views also. The superior must know the strengths of his team members and should assign the responsibilities keeping in mind their interests and specialities. **Communication also plays a very important role in avoiding conflicts at work places**. Be very clear and precise in your communication. Never adopt a casual attitude at work as it would strictly go against you.Never deliver any speech or presentation at a noisy place as no one will be able to understand what the other person intends to communicate resulting in misunderstandings.

Develop the Habit of Using Planners to Avoid Forgetting Important Dates and Tasks. Do not criticize or make fun of your colleagues. If he is not wearing the tie in the desired way, let him know the correct way. He will feel happy and look up to you in the future. Never ever rely on politics in the office as it spoils the environment completely. Blame game must be avoided strictly as it just adds on to the problems and doesn't provide any solution. You will not become unimportant if you accept your faults. Don't always expect the other person to come to you and discuss things. Be the first one to take the initiative. Learn to own your responsibilities and never pass on the blame to your colleagues. An individual must keep his personal and professional life separate.

Never carry your Problems to Work as it never allows you to concentrate in your Work. For an employee, office must come first and he must keep his personal interests on the backburner. Learn to trust your colleagues. Always approach the right person and don't spread rumours unnecessarily. One should not be too adamant at workplaces. Be a little more adjusting and flexible. Every employee must try to compromise to the best possible extent and try to find out an alternative. Create a healthy and a professional environment at office.

Differences, problems are bound to arise at workplaces, but steps must be taken at the right time to avoid unnecessary fights and disagreements. Conflict not only spoils the ambience but also reduces the productivity of the employees. They feel highly demotivated and don't feel like going to offices. Employees waste all their time and energy and nothing productive can be expected out of them and ultimately the organization is at loss.

Conclusion
It is rightly said that organizations are individual's first home as one spends the maximum time here. Employees must treat their fellow workers as a part of one big family and must work together to achieve the goals of the organization. Conflicts must be avoided at the workplace to ensure that the employees give their best for maximum productivity. Managers should understand the common causes of employee conflicts, so that a solution is found before the issues become unmanageable.
- Poor Communication. Poor communication is one of the main causes of conflict between employees in the workplace. ...
- Difference in Personalities. ...
- Different Values. ,Competition.

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. Wherever there are people, there always will be conflict. Managers have to deal with conflict in the workplace every day. Conflict management is the ability to be able to identify and handle conflicts sensibly, fairly, and efficiently.

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