



## INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF RESEARCH IN COMMERCE, IT AND MANAGEMENT

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## MANAGING CONFLICT THROUGH CONFRONTATION: AN OD INTERVENTION

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### ABSTRACT

The present study is based on conflict management style of different levels of employee for organizational growth and development in 18 organizations. This is a factorial design where level of the executive is independent variable and conflict management style is the dependent variable on the basis of which the 437 data has been collected from various types of organizations. The data has been calculated and analyzed through ANOVA and correlation. The result which found out that all the levels of employee are adopting confrontation style in comparison to other styles for managing the conflict. There is a significant difference between levels of employee as far as withdrawing and confrontation style of conflict management is concern. The findings also show the significant correlation among all the styles. Which states that though other styles are existing in organization but people prefer confrontation? Therefore it is concluded that if confrontation is there then transparency will be there and it may lead to good governance & organizational development.

### KEYWORDS

Confrontation, Governance, OD, Transparency.

### INTRODUCTION

OD is the concept of organization, defined as two or more people working together toward one or more shared goal(s). Development in this context is the notion that an organization may become more effective over time at achieving its goals. OD is a long range effort to improve organization's problem solving and renewal processes, particularly through more effective and collaborative management of organizational culture, often with the assistance of a change agent or catalyst and the use of the theory and technology of applied behavioral science. Every action that influences an organization's improvement program in a change agent-client system relationship can be said to be an intervention (deKler, 2007).

Interventions range from those designed to improve the effectiveness of individuals through those designed to deal with teams and groups, intergroup relations, and the total organization. There are interventions that focus on task issues (what people do), and those that focus on process issues (how people go about doing it). Finally, interventions may be roughly classified according to which change mechanism they tend to emphasize: for example, feedback, awareness of changing cultural norms, interaction and communication, conflict management, and education through either new knowledge or skill practice (Wendell ; Cecil Bell 1973). So among all the issues and interventions organisational conflict is one of the issue and conflict management strategy is one of the intervention for organisational development.

**Organizational conflict** is a state of discord caused by the actual or perceived opposition of needs, values and interests between people working together. Conflict takes many forms in organizations. There is the inevitable clash between formal authority and power and those individuals and groups affected. There are disputes over how revenues should be divided, how the work should be done, and how long and hard people should work. There are jurisdictional disagreements among individuals, departments, and between unions and management. There are subtler forms of conflict involving rivalries, jealousies, personality clashes, role definitions, and struggles for power and favor. There is also conflict within individuals — between competing needs and demands — to which individuals respond in different ways (Johnson, R 1976).

### Functional Conflict

(Positive)

Conflict that supports the goals of the group and improves its performance.

### Dysfunctional Conflict

(Negative)

Conflict that hinders group performance.

#### Types of Conflict:

- **Task Conflict**
- ✓ Conflicts over content and goals of the work.
- **Relationship Conflict**
- ✓ Conflict based on interpersonal relationships.
- **Process Conflict**



- ✓ Conflict over how work gets done
- **Personal Conflicts – Related to your or others Behavior/Style**
- ✓ **Differences in Style.**
  - People's style for a completing job can differ. Eg. one person may just want to get the work done quickly (task oriented), while another is more concerned about having it done a particular way e.g. artistic
- ✓ **Differences in Background/Gender**
  - Conflicts can arise between people because of differences in educational backgrounds, personal experiences, ethnic heritage, gender and political preferences.
- ✓ **Differences in Personality**
  - This type of conflict is often fueled by emotion and perceptions about somebody else's motives and character. Eg. a team leader jumps on someone for being late because he perceives the team member as being lazy and inconsiderate. The team member sees the team leader as being irrational.
- **Situational Conflicts – Based on the situation you are in**
- ✓ **Interdependence Conflicts**
  - A person's job depends on someone else's co-operation, output or input. Eg, a sales-person is constantly late inputting the monthly sales figures which causes the accountant to be late with her reports.
- ✓ **Differences in Leadership**
  - Leaders have different styles. Employees who change from one supervisor to another can become confused. Eg. One leader may be more open and delegates responsibility whilst another may be more directive. For an employee it becomes a conflict situation when he has to change his leader.

Conflicts between people in work groups, committees, task forces, and other organizational forms of face-to-face groups are inevitable. As we have mentioned, these conflicts may be destructive as well as constructive.

Conflict arises in groups because of the scarcity of freedom, position, and resources. People who value independence tend to resist the need for interdependence and, to some extent, conformity within a group. People who seek power therefore struggle with others for position or status within the group. Rewards and recognition are often perceived as insufficient and improperly distributed, and members are inclined to compete with each other for these prizes (Mills, T 1967).

In western culture, winning is more acceptable than losing, and competition is more prevalent than cooperation, all of which tends to intensify intragroup conflict. Group meetings are often conducted in a win-lose climate — that is, individual or subgroup interaction is conducted for the purpose of determining a winner and a loser rather than for achieving mutual problem solving (Johnson, R 1976).

### NEGATIVE EFFECTS OF GROUP CONFLICTS

The win-lose conflict in groups may have some of the following negative effects (Jones, J, Feiffer, J, 1973): Divert time and energy from the main issues, Delay decisions, Create deadlocks, Drive unaggressive committee members to the sidelines, Interfere with listening, Obstruct exploration of more alternatives, Decrease or destroy sensitivity, Cause members to drop out or resign from committees, Arouse anger that disrupts a meeting, Interfere with empathy, Leave losers resentful, Incline underdogs to sabotage, Provoke personal abuse, Cause defensiveness

Conflict in the group need not lead to negative results, however. The presence of a dissenting member or subgroup often results in more penetration of the group's problem and more creative solutions. This is because disagreement forces the members to think harder in an attempt to cope with what may be valid objections to general group opinion. But the group must know how to deal with differences that may arise (Argyris, C, 1957). Conflict may be warded through achieving a thorough rational process of problem solving, coupled with a willingness to explore issues and alternatives and to listen to each other (Johnson, R 1976).

Conflict is not always destructive, it may be a motivator. When it is destructive, however, managers need to understand and do something about it. A rational process for dealing with the conflict should be programmed. Such a process should include a planned action response on the part of the manager or the organization, rather than relying on a simple reaction or a change that occurs without specific action by management (Johnson, R 1976). True interdependence among members leads automatically to conflict resolution in the group. Interdependence recognizes that differences will exist and that they can be helpful. Hence, members learn to accept ideas from dissenters (which do not imply agreeing with them), they learn to listen and to value openness, and they learn to share a mutual problem-solving attitude to ensure the exploration of all facets of a problem facing the group (Jones, J, Feiffer, J, 1973)

**Intergroup conflict** between groups is a sometimes necessary, sometimes destructive, event that occurs at all levels and across all functions in organizations. Intergroup conflict may help generate creative tensions leading to more effective contributions to the organization's goals, such as competition between sales districts for the highest sales (Katz, D; Kahn, R 1966). Intergroup conflict is destructive when it alienates groups that should be working together, when it results in win-lose competition, and when it leads to compromises that represent less-than-optimum outcomes.

Intergroup conflict occurs in two general forms. **Horizontal strain** involves competition between functions: for example, sales versus production, research and development versus engineering, purchasing versus legal, line versus staff, and so on. **Vertical strain** involves competition between hierarchical levels: for example, union versus management, foremen versus middle management, shop workers versus foremen (Katz, D; Kahn, R 1966). A struggle between a group of employees and management is an example of vertical strain or conflict. A clash between a sales department and production over inventory policy would be an example of horizontal strain.

Thus, conflict affecting organizations can occur in individuals, between individuals, and between groups. Conflicts within work groups are often caused by struggles over control, status, and scarce resources. Conflicts between groups in organizations have similar origins. The constructive resolution or strategies of such conflicts can most often be like below-

### STRATEGIES FOR MANAGING GROUP CONFLICTS

- **AVOIDANCE** - a management strategy which includes non attention or creating a total separation of the combatants or a partial separation that allows limited interaction.
- **SMOOTHING** - technique which stresses the achievement of harmony between disputants.
- **DOMINANCE OR POWER INTERVENTION** - the imposition of a solution by higher management, other than the level at which the conflict exists.
- **COMPROMISE** - strategy that seeks a resolution which satisfies at least part of the each, party's position.
- **CONFRONTATION** - strategy featuring a thorough and frank discussion of the sources and types of conflict and achieving a resolution that is in the best interest of the group, but that may be at the expense of one or all of the conflicting parties (Montana, P 2008).

### OBJECTIVES

- To find out conflict management style used by the various organisation.
- To find out is there any difference between front line and middle line and top level executives as far as conflict management styles are concerned.
- To find out which style is best intervention for organizational development (OD),

**RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The present study is a factorial design. It has aimed to study from 18 organisations by taking 437 samples of top level, middle level and front line executives i.e. on an average total 25 employees from each organizations. The name of organizations are OMFED, Hari Machines Ltd, Durgapur Projects Ltd, HDFC, Puran Alloy, OCL, ICICI Prudential, SBI(Other than Rourkela), TATA AIG, TATA AIG Life Insurance, LIC(Bokaro), Bengal Techno Crats, L & T, Sahara India, Rourkela Steel Plant, TATA Ferro Alloys, Lafarge Cement, Telcon.

The Conflict management styles which have been evaluated in the present study are withdrawing, smoothing, forcing, compromising, and confrontation styles.

**FINDINGS AND RESULTS**

**TABLE 1: SHOWS THE F VALUE AND SIGNIFICANT IMPACT OF STYLES OF CONFLICT MANAGEMENT ON LEVELS OF EMPLOYEE IN ORGANIZATION**

			Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Withdrawing	Between Groups	(Combined)	1.991	2	.996	3.000	.050*
	Within Groups		144.054	434	.332		
	Total		146.045	436			
forcing * level	Between Groups	(Combined)	.409	2	.205	.624	.536
	Within Groups		142.311	434	.328		
	Total		142.720	436			
smoothing * level	Between Groups	(Combined)	.988	2	.494	.778	.460
	Within Groups		275.689	434	.635		
	Total		276.677	436			
compromising * level	Between Groups	(Combined)	.776	2	.388	1.015	.363
	Within Groups		165.767	434	.382		
	Total		166.542	436			
confronting * level	Between Groups	(Combined)	4.395	2	2.197	3.225	.041*
	Within Groups		295.713	434	.681		
	Total		300.108	436			

\* significant at the 0.05 level

**TABLE 2: SHOWS THE MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS OF LEVELS OF EMPLOYEE IN RELATION TO DIFFERENT STYLE OF CONFLICT MANAGEMENT**

Level		withdrawing	forcings	smoothing	compromising	confronting
Front line	Mean	2.9051	3.0363	3.1712	3.1311	3.3573
	N	187	187	187	187	187
	Std. Deviation	.5379	.5744	.7514	.6361	.7546
Middle level	Mean	2.9078	3.1030	3.2509	3.1544	3.5141
	N	176	176	176	176	176
	Std. Deviation	.5699	.5551	.7782	.5859	.8563
Top level	Mean	2.7265	3.0591	3.2918	3.2511	3.6211
	N	74	74	74	74	74
	Std. Deviation	.6764	.6085	.9413	.6459	.9177
Total	Mean	2.8760	3.0670	3.2237	3.1608	3.4651
	N	437	437	437	437	437
	Std. Deviation	.5788	.5721	.7966	.6180	.8297

**TABLE 3: SHOWS INTER CORRELATION OF VARIOUS STYLES OF CONFLICT MANAGEMENT**

		withdrawing	forcing	smoothing	compromising	confronting
withdrawing	Pearson Correlation	1.000	.103	.113	.090	.159
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.031*	.019*	.059	.001**
	Sum of Squares and Cross-products	146.045	14.929	22.637	14.103	33.329
	Covariance	.335	3.424E-02	5.192E-02	3.235E-02	7.644E-02
	N	437	437	437	437	437
forcing	Pearson Correlation	.103	1.000	.245	.250	.172
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.031	.	.000	.000	.000
	Sum of Squares and Cross-products	14.929	142.720	48.615	38.571	35.583
	Covariance	3.424E-02	.327	.112	8.847E-02	8.161E-02
	N	437	437	437	437	437
smoothing	Pearson Correlation	.113	.245	1.000	.390	.530
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.019	.000	.	.000	.000
	Sum of Squares and Cross-products	22.637	48.615	276.677	83.612	152.658
	Covariance	5.192E-02	.112	.635	.192	.350
	N	437	437	437	437	437
Compromising	Pearson Correlation	.090	.250	.390	1.000	.396
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.059	.000	.000	.	.000
	Sum of Squares and Cross-products	14.103	38.571	83.612	166.542	88.590
	Covariance	3.235E-02	8.847E-02	.192	.382	.203
	N	437	437	437	437	437
confronting	Pearson Correlation	.159	.172	.530	.396	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.000	.000	.000	.
	Sum of Squares and Cross-products	33.329	35.583	152.658	88.590	300.108
	Covariance	7.644E-02	8.161E-02	.350	.203	.688
	N	437	437	437	437	437

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).



The present study has focused on two factors i.e. level of employee and their conflict management style in various organizations. The result which came out from the study unfolded many aspect of corporate operation, basically at the time of organization development (OD) practices.

From the result it has been found out that there is a significant difference between level of employee as far as some style of conflict management is concern e.g. withdrawing style (.05) and confrontation style(.04) (Table-1) of conflict. Front line, middle level, top level executives are different from each other. Middle level (mean =2.9078) executives use withdrawing style in most of the cases in conflict situation in comparison to front line (mean =2.9051) and top level (mean =2.7265)(Table-2). It may be due to the pressure and expectation from both top & front line executives. They feel like withdrawing from the situation, so that neither junior will complain for partiality nor seniors will ask for favor. They wanted to limit their interaction with other two groups. As far as forcing, smoothing and compromising styles are concern there is no significant difference between front line, middle level and top level executives  $F = .624$ ,  $F = .778$ ,  $F = 1.015$  respectively(Table-1). It indicates that irrespective of level all the executive apply forcing, smoothing & compromising style of conflict management as and when the situation demand. Since the organizations which are taken for this study are all very big organization and meant for the public interest, for which above three styles are evenly utilized by all the levels of organization. To make it more specific it has been found out that from this three styles smoothing style is being utilized by maximum organization for conflict management(Mean of smoothing = 3.2237) in comparison to forcing (Mean = 3.0670) compromising (M) = 3.1608 (Table-2). Because in some cases both the parties wants at least partial satisfaction in resolving the dispute which is termed as compromising. Since recent style of operation is not autocratic but free rein style, so the management just can not force the other party to solve the conflict which is in another way termed as forcing. But now a days every body wants harmony among the disputants which in other way termed as smoothing style of management. Though there is no significant difference between the levels of executive but the means shows that middle level employees use the forcing style more(M=3.10) in comparison to other two (M=3.03, M=3.06) (Table-2) in most cases, because of both side pressure. But top management always prefers compromise & smoothing style because they always prefer harmony, peace which is mantra for growth and achievement in leverage market for any company. But all said and done the findings shows a good indication for conformation style of conflict management. It shows that almost all the organization's best conflict management style is confrontation (Total Mean = 3.465). It also shows that confrontation is having significant effect on levels of employee ( $F = 3.22$  and  $<0.5$ ) Table-1). Top level executives are frequent practicer of confrontation style than other two levels. (M=3.62, M=3.51, M=3.35 respectively) (Table-2). In fact all the levels prefer confrontation as best style in comparison to other style of conflict management. It may be because confrontation deals with thorough and firm discussion of the sources and types of conflict and accordingly achieving a resolution that is in the best interest of the organization as a group, but may be at the expense of one or all of the conflicting parties. This finding is also a sign of good governance because when top levels adopting this style for managing conflict then it becomes a policy for others down the line executives. It also seems that they have touched the pulse of market But the findings which came out from the correlation calculation is very interesting. It shows that all styles are significantly correlated with each other at .01 and .05 levels. It means if any organization an employee is using one style of conflict management, then it is obvious that he will also use other styles indirectly at the time of real practice in the organization in 99% or 95% of cases. In other words when a conflict management process starts, initially there may be scope of using of forcing or smoothing or compromising or mix of more than one style and later stage if it is being found that style(s) is not effective then organization may go for using other styles which practically happens. In other words after knowing the sources and type of conflict through a frank discussion the trained conflict resolver (Top, middle and Front line executive) may utilize a series of intervention(style of conflict) such as testing the members ability and willingness to compromise, resorting to confrontation, enforced counseling, harmonizing the environment and/or termination as last resorts(Kaye.K1994).). So though confrontation was most accepted strategic style by all the levels of employee but at the time implementation, on the basis of parties' standard and level, all other styles are used for bigger interest of the organization.

## CONCLUSION

Management is presumed to be guided by a vision of the future. The manager reflects in his decision-making activities the values of the organization as they have developed through time, from the original founder-owner to the present top-management personnel. In navigating a path between the values of the organization and its objectives and goals, management has expectations concerning the organization's effectiveness and efficiency and frequently initiates changes within the organization. On other occasions, changes in the external environment — market demand, technology, or the political, social, or economic environment — require making appropriate changes in the activities of the organization. The organization faces these demands for change through the men and women who make up its membership, since organizational change ultimately depends on the willingness of employees and others to change their attitudes, behavior, their degree of knowledge and skill, or a combination of these (Clark.A 1976) with which they will handel inter changes as well as external changes. Internal changes either can create conflict or competition. In both the cases it leads to orgaisational development. Confrontation can be a attitude, skill with which conflict as well as competition can me managed .

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