Conflict
Conflicts

Conflict Defined

− A process that begins when one party perceives that another party has negatively affected, or is about to negatively affect, something that the first party cares about.
  • Is that point in an ongoing activity when an interaction “crosses over” to become an interparty conflict.

− Encompasses a wide range of conflicts that people experience in organizations
  • Incompatibility of goals
  • Differences over interpretations of facts
  • Disagreements based on behavioral expectations
Transitions in Conflict Thought

Traditional View of Conflict
The belief that all conflict is harmful and must be avoided.

Causes:
• Poor communication
• Lack of openness
• Failure to respond to employee needs
Functional versus Dysfunctional Conflict

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

**Dysfunctional Conflict**
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.
The Conflict Process

Stage I
Potential opposition or incompatibility

Antecedent conditions
- Communication
- Structure
- Personal variables

Stage II
Cognition and personalization

Perceived conflict

Stage III
Intentions

Conflict-handling intentions
- Competing
- Collaborating
- Compromising
- Avoiding
- Accommodating

Stage IV
Behavior

Overt conflict
- Party’s behavior
- Other’s reaction

Stage V
Outcomes

Increased group performance
Decreased group performance

EXHIBIT 15-1
Stage I: Potential Opposition or Incompatibility

- Communication
  - Semantic difficulties, misunderstandings, and “noise”

- Structure
  - Size and specialization of jobs
  - Jurisdictional clarity/ambiguity
  - Member/goal incompatibility
  - Leadership styles (close or participative)
  - Reward systems (win-lose)
  - Dependence/interdependence of groups

- Personal Variables
  - Differing individual value systems
  - Personality types
Stage II: Cognition and Personalization

Perceived Conflict
Awareness by one or more parties of the existence of conditions that create opportunities for conflict to arise.

Felt Conflict
Emotional involvement in a conflict creating anxiety, tenseness, frustration, or hostility.

Conflict Definition

Negative Emotions

Positive Feelings
Stage III: Intentions

Intentions
Decisions to act in a given way.

Cooperativeness:
• Attempting to satisfy the other party’s concerns.

Assertiveness:
• Attempting to satisfy one’s own concerns.
Dimensions of Conflict-Handling Intentions


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Stage III: Intentions (cont’d)

Competing
A desire to satisfy one’s interests, regardless of the impact on the other party to the conflict.

Collaborating
A situation in which the parties to a conflict each desire to satisfy fully the concerns of all parties.

Avoiding
The desire to withdraw from or suppress a conflict.
Stage III: Intentions (cont’d)

Accommodating
The willingness of one party in a conflict to place the opponent’s interests above his or her own.

Compromising
A situation in which each party to a conflict is willing to give up something.
Stage IV: Behavior

Conflict Management

The use of resolution and stimulation techniques to achieve the desired level of conflict.
Conflict-Intensity Continuum

Annihilatory conflict

Overt efforts to destroy the other party
Aggressive physical attacks
Threats and ultimatums
Assertive verbal attacks
Overt questioning or challenging of others
Minor disagreements or misunderstandings

No conflict


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Conflict Resolution Techniques

- Problem solving
- Superordinate goals
- Expansion of resources
- Avoidance
- Smoothing
- Compromise
- Authoritative command
- Altering the human variable
- Altering the structural variables

Conflict Resolution Techniques

- Communication
- Bringing in outsiders
- Restructuring the organization
- Appointing a devil’s advocate


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Stage V: Outcomes

- **Functional Outcomes from Conflict**
  - Increased group performance
  - Improved quality of decisions
  - Stimulation of creativity and innovation
  - Encouragement of interest and curiosity
  - Provision of a medium for problem-solving
  - Creation of an environment for self-evaluation and change

- **Creating Functional Conflict**
  - Reward dissent and punish conflict avoiders
Stage V: Outcomes

- Dysfunctional Outcomes from Conflict
  - Development of discontent
  - Reduced group effectiveness
  - Retarded communication
  - Reduced group cohesiveness
  - Infighting among group members overcomes group goals