
Assessment of Conflict Management Impact and the Employees' Productivity

BY

Grace W. WILLIAM, Ph.D
Department of Business Management
Faculty of Business Administration
University of California
Oakland
California
United States

ABSTRACT

The study was carried out to assess the conflict management impact and the employees' productivity. Conflict management was viewed as a broader concept that includes conflict management strategies, processes, and skills for resolving workplace conflicts. Conflict, as an obstacle, is an inescapable component of social life which pervades various organizational processes. This may affect the parties positively or negatively. The study concluded that conflicts usually occur when two or more parties like teams, departments, and individuals do not agree on anything due to certain factors like personalities, beliefs, values and needs. Conflict can be expressed in numerous ways, such as insults, noncooperation, bullying, and anger. Its causes can range from personality clashes and misunderstood communication to organizational mismanagement. However, conflict management involves acquiring skills related to conflict resolution, self-awareness about conflict modes, conflict communication skills, and establishing a structure for management of conflict in the environment. As a result, conflict management prevents fights from erupting and allows employees to have an impact on their productivity. One of the recommendations made was that organizations should embark on training and retraining their employees about conflict management so as to create a conducive working environment.

KEYWORDS: Conflict, Management, Employee, and Productivity

Introduction

Conflicts are common occurrences in human societies, which may be due to competition between people, groups, or organizations striving to succeed, in most cases at the expense of others, by eliminating the various obstacles that hold them back. Conflict, as an obstacle, is an inescapable component of social life which pervades various organizational processes (Agwu, 2013). Scholars and researchers have attempted to analyze how conflict management works in organizations since different organizations face different conflicts. Conflicts have different sources and can lead to positive or negative impacts. It has been mainly emphasized that the type of conflicts faced by an organization can determine its failure or success, and conflict should be avoided at all costs (Tjosvold & Sun, 2013). Conflict management depends on the kind of strategies that suit the organization and have an added advantage to the organization in the long run. Conflict management is also seen as a wider concept which involves conflict management strategies, processes, and skills for mitigating conflicts in the workplace.

Conflicts normally occur when two or more parties like teams, departments, and individuals do not agree on anything due to certain factors like personalities, beliefs, values and needs (Mwangi & Ragui, 2013). This may affect the parties negatively or positively. In a work place, conflict normally occurs between employees and management. Kaimenyi (2014), conflict is a process in which a party believes that the other party has a negative perception of his or her interests. Simpao (2013), conflict is seen to be the struggle for resources, power, status, beliefs, preferences and desires. Employee productivity is affected when conflicts are many, and this impacts how the employee performs in the work environment. Conflicts usually affect the creativity and innovation, the efficiency and effectiveness of the employees, and there are also changes in attitude and many others. Iravo (2011) states that conflicts are easily handled when there are fewer, which can be bad in the long run since conflict is seen to have both positive and negative effects on an organization's productivity.

Statement Problem

Conflict management is seen to have various ways of suppressing conflicts, either permanently or temporarily. Some organizations are facing problems with conflict management between employees and productivity. In some cases, conflict management exists between an organization and employee productivity. Poor motivation of employees reduces the output of employees' productivity, and this results in low profit for the organization. Employees are also being affected in the areas of poor interpersonal relationships, loss of payment, and dismissal from employment, or eventual loss of life and time constraint. The biggest problems in organizations are developing the institution of conflict management control. Therefore, the study investigates the assessment of conflict management impact and employee productivity.

Concept of Conflict Management

Conflict management refers to the strategies that help individuals understand the causes of a conflict and help prevent it at the right time. Conflict management is the application of resolution and stimulation techniques to achieve the optimum level of department conflict (Robbins & DeCenzo, 2007). Conflict management refers to techniques and ideas designed to reduce the negative effects of conflict and enhance the positive outcomes for all parties involved. Alper, Tjosvold, & Law, (2000) stated that conflict management refers to the process of limiting the negative aspects of conflict while increasing the positive aspects of conflict. The aim of conflict management is to enhance learning and group outcomes, including effectiveness or performance in an organizational setting. Properly managed conflict can improve group outcomes. Conflict management is the practice of being able to identify and handle conflicts sensibly, fairly, and efficiently. The Management Study Guide (2021), Conflict Management refers to the steps taken to prevent conflict at the appropriate time and to help resolve it in an effective and smooth manner. Establishing conflict management processes in an organization is fundamental as it helps reduce conflict instances among employees.

Conflict management plays a very important role in preventing conflicts among individuals. According to Chand, (2020), conflict management is the principle that all conflicts cannot necessarily be resolved, but learning how to manage conflicts can decrease the odds of non-productive escalation. Conflict Management prevents the eruption of fights and also allows the employees to be serious about their work. Conflicts also lead to unnecessary tensions and disagreements among the individuals (MSG 2021). Conflict management involves acquiring skills related to conflict resolution, self-awareness about conflict modes, conflict communication skills, and establishing a structure for management of conflict in your environment. Conflict management is the approach and strategies geared towards achieving a

positive outcome and resolution amongst the parties involved in matters relating to conflicts (Todd, 2021). These strategies and approaches are dependent on the type of conflict that exists, the organizations, or institutions involved. It could be a systematic or unordered method that is task-specific, research-oriented, and requires proper attention.

Types of Conflict

In the organization, it sometimes seems as if some types of conflict are always with us (Shonk, 2020). In particular, three types of conflict are common in organizations: task conflict, relationship conflict, and value conflict. Although open communication, collaboration, and respect will go a long way toward conflict management, the three types of conflict can also benefit from targeted conflict-resolution tactics.

Task Conflict: Task conflict refers to issues that occur when employees don't agree about how to perform a certain task or have different understandings of the company's policies and procedures (Donohoe, & Thompson, 2019). Task conflict can help make your employees more open with each other if they address it appropriately and promptly. Indeed Editorial Team (2021) stated that task conflict is a workplace disagreement over the best way to accomplish work tasks. Causes of task conflict can include differing attitudes, needs or behaviors in an organization. In an organization, task conflict occurs when two parties are unable to move forward on a task due to differing needs, behaviors or attitudes (Grimsley, 2021). It can be conflict over organizational policies and procedures, distribution of resources or the method or means of completing a task.

Relationship Conflict: Relationship conflict is a struggle, disagreement, argument or debate that takes place between two people within a relationship (Cain, 2020). Relationship conflict is a conflict resulting from either personality clashes or negative emotional interactions between two or more people (Grimsley, 2020). For example, you may have a conflict with your cube mate because you keep a very tidy workspace and his is always messy. Lombardo, (2021) stated that relationship conflict is a type of personal conflict develops over disagreements and differences between individuals or groups. The biggest difference is that this type of conflict is over personal issues and not work-related.

Value Conflict: Value conflict occurs when individuals or groups of people hold strong personal beliefs that are in disagreement within themselves or in disagreement with the institution's/ organization's values (Brainyias 2011). These may include religious differences, cultural differences or differences in upbringing. Value conflicts are caused by perceived or actual incompatible belief systems. Values are beliefs that people use to give meaning to their lives (Velert, 2020). Value disputes arise only when people attempt to force one set of values on others or lay claim to exclusive value systems that do not allow for divergent beliefs. Davis, (2020) asserted that value conflicts are caused by perceived or actual incompatible belief systems. Values are beliefs that people use to give meaning to their lives. Values explain what is "good" or "bad," "right" or "wrong." Differing values need not cause conflict.

Conflict Management Strategies

Conflict management strategies are based on concern for employees' productivity and concern for people. These strategies are integrated, obliging, dominating, and compromising. This conflict management strategy is stated differently despite some common terms. Robbins and DeCanzo (2007) state that avoidance, accommodation, forcing, compromise, and collaboration are some of the conflict management strategies. While Rahim (2002) mentions five conflict

management strategies: Integrating, Obliging, Dominating, Avoiding and Compromising. Besic and Stanisavljevic (2014) point out that there isn't a specific conflict management strategy for every conflict and the efficient conflict management strategy is based on communication styles of people. Similarly, Rahim and Shapiro (2000) claim that how personnel in organizations conflict is one of the crucial factors for effective conflict management. Rahim (2002) also categorized these strategies as integrating, obliging, dominating, and compromising, as concerns for self and others. These strategies are explained as follows:

Integrating: Integrating refers to an effective problem solving strategy. Robbins and DeCenzo (2007) define integrating with some phrases which are open and honest discussion, intensive listening, to understand differences and mutual agreement. This strategy is also mentioned as collaboration whose primary aim of this strategy is to meet the needs of two parts, thus satisfaction of both sides can be provided. Rahim, (2002) stated that integrating is suitable when there is a complex problem or one part can't solve this problem on its own and two opposing parts try to achieve a common solution by exchanging ideas, knowledge, suggestion choices.

Obliging: In this strategy, opposing topics are neglected and common points are emphasized. One part gives up its own desires to meet needs of other part. This strategy is appropriate when one part hasn't enough information about the topic and the relationship, between both parts, is wanted to maintain (Rahim, 2002). Robbins (2001) states that relationship sometimes is more important for one part so this part can be eager to sacrifice itself as well as to prefer the satisfaction of the other part. This strategy should be used when the topic isn't important for one part and this part wants to gain credits for next issues.

Dominating: one part neglects the needs and satisfaction of other part and give importance to only its own goals to win position in this strategy. Generally, this situation occurs when one part has more power or formal authority and the effect of the conflict isn't thought, but achievement of aims and gaining more advantages are taken into consideration. Rahim, (2002) stated that this strategy isn't suitable when

- ❖ The issue involved in conflict is complex and there is not enough time to make a good decision;
- ❖ Both parts have equal power;
- ❖ Being used this style by one or both parts may lead to stalemate;
- ❖ Issues are not important to the part.

Compromising: As a result of this management strategy, there isn't a winning or losing part. Both sides gain some advantages but not all of them and they have to give up something. They share the conflict objectives (Robbins, 2001). Compromising means that the parties to the conflict settle on a solution that gives both of them part of what they wanted. No party gets exactly what it wanted, but neither loses entirely either.

Challenges of Conflict management and Employees Productivity

Conflict can occur in any organization when employees with different backgrounds and priorities work together. Conflict can be expressed in numerous ways, such as insults, noncooperation, bullying, and anger. Its causes can range from personality clashes and misunderstood communication to organizational mismanagement (SHRM 2021). The negative effects of workplace conflict can include work disruptions, decreased productivity, project

failure, absenteeism, turnover and termination. Emotional stress can be both a cause and an effect of workplace conflict. Conflict in organizations has always been in the interest of research, and this has not changed. This is a problem that affects small, medium, and large businesses alike. Furthermore, the modern working style must be understood from today's perspective, especially in the midst of a pandemic. According to DeChurch & Hamilton (2007), conflicts can be relationship-based or task-based. Conflicts of interests arise in groups' scarcity of freedom, position, and resources. Employees who have different personalities have different attitudes towards organizational conflicts. As a result, they have different behavior during conflicts. For employees, both personality and situational factors are essential. But there are people who are inflexible in organizational conflicts. It's important to respect and consider the motives behind their behavior in order to control them during the conflict process (Paresashvili & Maisuradze, 2017). Conflict is thus endemic despite the best management practices in organizations and manifests in various forms as an intrinsic and unavoidable feature of employment relationships.

Conclusion

The study concluded that conflicts usually occur when two or more parties like teams, departments, and individuals do not agree on anything due to certain factors like personalities, beliefs, values and needs. Conflict can be expressed in numerous ways, such as insults, noncooperation, bullying, and anger. Its causes can range from personality clashes and misunderstood communication to organizational mismanagement. However, conflict management involves acquiring skills related to conflict resolution, self-awareness about conflict modes, conflict communication skills, and establishing a structure for management of conflict in the environment. As a result, conflict management prevents fights from erupting and allows employees to have an impact on their productivity.

Recommendations

1. Organization should embark on training and retraining the employees about conflict management so as to create a conducive working environment.
2. Employees should be educated about conflict management in order to establish good productivity and beneficial working environment.
3. Organization should adopt policies to guarantee that any internal conflict disagreement within the organization is to resolved quickly.

REFERENCES

- Agwu, M. O. (2013). Conflict management and employees performance in Julius Berger Nigeria Plc. Bonny Island. *International Journal of Academic Research in Management*, 2(4), 125–139.
- Alper, S., Tjosvold, D. & Law, K. (2000). Conflict management, efficacy, and performance in organizational teams. *Personnel Psychology*. 53(3):625–642.
- Besic, C. & Stanisavljevic, B. (2014). Relation between managers' communication competence and conflict management styles. *7th international conference of the school of economics and business. Policy*, 11(3), 133-142
- Brainyias (2011). *Value conflict*. Available at: <https://www.brainyias.com/value-conflict>
- Cain, H. (2020). *What is Relationship Conflict?* Available at: <https://oueverydaylife.com/relationship-conflict-6665294.html>
- Chand, S. (2020). *Conflict Management: Characteristics, Types, Stages, Causes and other Details*. Retrieved from: <https://www.yourarticlelibrary.com/business/conflict-management-characteristics-types-stages-causes-and-other-details/5431>
- Davis, B. (2020). *What are conflicting values?* Available at: <https://www.mvorganizing.org/what-are-conflicting-values/>
- DeChurch, L. A. & Hamilton, K. L. (2007). Effects of Conflict Management Strategies on Perceptions of Intragroup Conflict. *Group Dynamics: Theory, Research, and Practice*, 11, 66–78.
- Donohoe, A. & Thompson, J. (2019). *What Is Task Conflict? Human Resources*.
- Grimsley, S. (2020). *Relationship Conflict and Management: Definition & Resolution Strategies*. Available at: <https://study.com/academy/lesson/relationship-conflict-and-management-definition-resolution-strategies-quiz.html>
- Grimsley, S. (2021). *What Is Task Conflict? - Definition & Explanation*. Available at: <https://study.com/academy/lesson/what-is-task-conflict-definition-lesson-quiz.html>
- Indeed Editorial Team (2021). *What Is Task Conflict in the Workplace? (With Example)*. Available at: <https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/career-development/task-conflict>
- Iravo, M. A. (2011). Effect of Conflict Management in Performance of Public Secondary Schools in Machakos County, Kenya, 170.
- Kaimenyi, C. K. (2014). The Influence of Conflict Management Styles on Leadership Approaches within Small-scale Businesses in Kenya, 16(9), 55–59.
- Lombardo, J. (2021). *Sources of Conflict in the Workplace: Task, Relationship, and Process Conflict*. Available at: <https://study.com/academy/lesson/sources-of-conflict-in-the-workpalce-task-relationship-and-process-conflict.html>
- Management Study Guide (2021). *Conflict Management at Workplace*. Available at: <https://www.managementstudyguide.com/conflict-management-at-workplace.htm>

- Mwangi, C., & Ragui, M. (2013). Effects of work place conflicts on employee performance in the air transport industry in Kenya. *Prime Journal of Business Administration and Management (BAM)*.
- Paresashvili, N. & Maisuradze, T. (2017) Mechanisms of organizational conflict resolution in Georgia. *Journal of International Economic Research* 3, 69-76.
- Rahim, M. A. (2002). Toward a theory of managing organizational conflict. *The International Journal of Conflict Management*, 13, 206-235.
- Rahim, M. A., Magner, N. R., & Shapiro, D. L. (2000). Do justice perceptions influence styles of handling conflict with supervisors? What justice perceptions, precisely? *International Journal of Conflict Management*. 11(1), 9-31.
- Robbins, S. (2001). *Essentials of organizational behavior*. Prentice Hall.
- Robbins, S. P., DeCenzo, D. A., & Coulter, M. K. (2007). *Fundamentals of management: essential concepts and applications*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall.
- Shonk, K. (2020). *3 types of conflict and how to address them*. Available at: <https://www.pon.harvard.edu/daily/conflict-resolution/types-conflict/>
- SHRM (2021). *Managing Workplace Conflict*. Available at: <https://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/tools-and-samples/toolkits/>
- Simpao, B. A. (2013). *Conflict Management in the Health Care Workplace*.
- Tjosvold, D., & Sun, H. F. (2013). Understanding Conflict Avoidance: Relationship, Motivations, Actions, and Consequences. *International Journal of Conflict Management*.
- Todd, S. (2021). *What is Conflict Management? (Types, Theories, And Strategies)*. Retrieved from: <https://opensourcedworkplace.com/news/what-is-conflict-management-types-theories-and-strategies>
- Velert, S. (2020). *What is the meaning of value conflict?* Available at: <https://askinglot.com/what-is-the-meaning-of-value-conflict>