UNIT IV

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Groups and Teams

Group

In any organization employees generally work as various groups. A group is defined as two or more people with a unifying relationship, interacting and interdependent, who have joined together, formally or informally, to achieve certain objectives. If a group exists in an organization it means that its members are motivated to join and perceive the group as a unified unit of interacting people. The members contribute in varying amounts to the group processes in terms of time, energy, *etc.* They agree or disagree to take decisions through various forms of interaction.

Group dynamics

Kurt Lewin, widely accepted as the father of group dynamics, coined and popularized the term, *Group Dynamics*, in the 1930's. Group dynamics describes how a group should be organized and managed. Here, democratic leadership, member participation and overall cooperation are emphasized.

Group dynamics consists of a set of techniques such as role playing, brainstorming, group therapy, sensitivity training, team building, transactional analysis, focus groups, leaders groups, Johari Window, *etc*. It deals with the internal nature of groups, that is, how groups are formed, what are the structures and processes, and how they function and affect the individual members, other groups and the organization as a whole.

Why do people join groups?

No single reason can be given to the question. People join different groups depending on the benefits provided by each group.

People join groups mostly for security, status, self-esteem, affiliation, power and goal attainment.

* *Security:* Individuals feel that they can reduce the insecurity of being alone. People feel stronger or confident when they are in a group. They feel they can face any threat as a group.[*e.g.* Construction workers joining as a group under a particular contractor]
* *Status:* To feel more important and to get recognition for status people join high-profile, influential or popular/visible groups. [*e.g.* People joining Lion's club or Rotary club]
* *Self-esteem:* As people feel that their value of self-esteem gets enhanced they join groups. It is assumed that membership in any particular group gives increased feeling of worth to the members. [*e.g.* Business people becoming members of elite clubs]
* *Affiliation:* As social beings, people's social needs are met in groups. Regular interactions satisfy members' social needs. [*e.g.* Residents becoming members of local residents' welfare associations]
* *Power:* As unity is strength, what cannot be accomplished as individuals can be attained as a group. There is power in numbers. [*e.g.* Employees joining trade unions]
* *Goal attainment:* As many tasks cannot be carried out by individual persons, a group of persons is needed. Groups help pooling of knowledge, talents or power to accomplish difficult tasks. [*e.g.* Formation of voluntary organizations to help local society]

Theories of group formation

There are a few theories to explain group formation.

* *Propinquity theory:*

The word 'propinquity' simply means that individuals affiliate with one another or join together for social needs because of spatial or geographical proximity. That is, people who live in one place or nearby or the workers working in one

place/organization tend to join together as groups. [*E.g.* Flat owners joining Flat owners' Welfare Association of a particular apartment]

Physical nearness makes people to join a group. There are exceptions like virtual teams in electronic, online networking or telecommuting industries where the groups/ teams are formed not due to physical nearness but are linked in cyberspace.

∗ *Homan's interaction theory:*

It is a classic theory of George Homan based on activities, interactions and sentiments. The three elements are directly related to each other. Sharing of common activities lead to interactions which result in stronger sentiments (*i.e.* how much the other persons are liked or disliked). The major element is interaction. Persons in a group interact with one another not because of physical nearness (or linked by cyberspace) but to attain many group goals through cooperation and problem solving. People engaged in same type of activities form groups, irrespective of physical proximity for interactions. (*e.g.* Cricket players forming a cricket club in a district)

Balance theory:

Theodore Newcomb's balance theory suggests that people are attracted to one another because of similar attitudes towards commonly relevant objects, goals or icons. Once a relationship is formed, the group members try to maintain a symmetrical balance between the attraction and the common attitudes. Both propinquity and interaction play a role in balance theory (*e.g.* Farmers who are against usage of chemicals forming a group "Organic Farmers' Association").

∗ *Exchange theory:*

It is from social psychology similar to work motivation theory. It is based on reward, cost and outcomes of interaction. Those who join a group expect that there must be some outcomes whose value must be greater than the cost of joining or being in group. Rewards from being in a group satisfy needs while costs incurred create anxiety. [*E.g.* Business people joining CII (Confederation of Indian Industries)]

Types of Groups

Groups are classified into different categories

∗ *Dyad:* It is the simplest form of group consisting of just two persons. But in reality groups are more complex.

∗ *Small Group and Primary Group:* Though these two terms are often used interchangeably technically there is a difference. The sole criterion of a small group is that the size is small, that is small enough for fairly constant interaction and communication to occur face-to-face (in recent times electronically). The primary group, in addition to being small, must have a feeling of comradeship, loyalty, and common sense of values among its members. That is, all primary groups are small groups but not all small groups are primary groups.

Examples of a primary group are the family and the peer group. Work groups also qualify as primary groups. Primary group has tremendous impact on individual behavior, regardless of environmental conditions. Of late, many companies have started using the power of primary group by organizing self-managed teams. These groups are natural work groups performing many functions such as planning, organizing and controlling the work.

∗ *Membership and Reference Groups:* In membership groups the members actually become members of the group based on certain criteria such as lawyers becoming members of Bar Council of India or doctors joining Indian Medical Association. Reference groups are the groups to which an individual would like to belong *i.e.* the group the individual identifies with [(*e.*g.) People identifying themselves as disciples or followers of Sathya Sai or Amritanandarmayi.]

∗ *In-groups and Out-groups:* In-group members are those who have or share the dominant values and wield more influence such as the 'Caucus' in the office of the Prime Minister which has a greater say than others. Out-group members do not wield so much power as in-group members (*e.g.* Ministers in the cabinet committee.)

∗ *Command Group and Task Group:* Determined by the organization chart, a command group has members who directly report to a particular manager such as all marketing executives doing similar nature of group and all reporting to the marketing manager. Task groups also represent individuals working together as determined by the

organization. But unlike the command group, the task groups' boundaries are not limited to any particular hierarchical level. It can cross command relationship. Selecting a place to start a branch office for a company requires a group of experts from different functional areas such production, marketing, finance and HR department. These experts, for this particular task of selecting a suitable place, need not report to their functional heads. Most of the task groups are temporary, as these groups are dismantled once the tasks are accomplished.

* *Interest Groups and Friendship Groups:* In interest group, people join together for a particular objective. That is, they have a common interest. Employees who join together to have their working hours changed, to get their dismissed colleague reinstated or to have better food in the canteen represent the formation of a united body to further their common interest. (*e.*g. Employees' Association). Friendship groups are formed by individuals who have one or more common characteristics. These are social groups, mostly outside the work situation, based on similar age, ethnicity, heritage *etc.* People organizing camps for blood/eye donation or antipollution form friendship groups.

* *Formal group and Informal Group:* Formal group is a designated work group defined by an organization's structure. Examples are functional departments (finance, operations, marketing or human resources), Cross-functional or Task Groups, Grievances Committee, Executive Committee and even the Board of Directors. Informal group is neither formally structured nor organizationally determined. These types of groups appear in response to the needs of people for social contact such as friendship group, interest group, recreation club, sports club etc.

Formal *vs* Informal Group

Basis of Difference	Formal Group	Informal Group
Formation	Formal group is well planned and created deliberately	Informal group originates automatically
Structure	It is an official hierarchy of relations. It has well defined authority and responsibility relationships.	Its structure is based on personal relationships which develop automatically when people work together.
Authority	Formal authority is institutional. *i.e.,* it attaches to a position and a person exercises it by virtue of his position.	Informal authority is personal *i.e.,* attaches to a person. It flows downward, upward and horizontally.
Chain of Command	Formal group follows the official chain of command which can't be changed.	Informal group does not have a fixed chain of command. It is based on the sentiments of the members. There are no fixed patterns of communication.
Leadership	The managers who have formal authority provide leadership to the workers.	Informal leaders are chosen by group members.
Communication	Communication is formal and follows the channels and direction laid down by the management.	The flow of communication has no pre-decided pattern. It can flow in any direction irrespective of the status or position of the parties.
Pattern of Behavior	It has a prescribed pattern of behavior for its members. There is an official system of rewards and punishment to regulate the behavior of members.	It develops social norms of behavior through mutual consent of members. Rewards include satisfaction, esteem, recognition *etc* and punishments include censure, isolation, boycott *etc*
Human Relations	Formal group relates technological side of the organization. It does not take care of human sentiments	Informal group reflects human aspect. It is based on attitudes, likes and dislikes, tastes, language *etc* of people.
Flexibility	It follows a rigid structure of relationships	It is loosely structured and highly flexible in nature.
Stability	Formal group is usually stable. It has the capacity to survive despite changes in the external environment.	Informal group may not last long. It may to be dissolved because of internal and external changes.

Dynamics of Informal Groups.

As formal groups, informal groups in organizations also play a significant role. The major difference between formal and informal groups is that while formal group has officially prescribed goals and relationships, informal group does not have any such goals decided by the organization. In most cases, formal and informal groups are not considered as separate entities. There will be informal groups in every formal organization and every informal organization will ultimately resemble formal organization.

Norms and Roles in informal groups

Norms are the prescriptions determined by the group.

Norms will be strictly enforced in the following circumstances:

∗ To enable the group survive.

∗ To help the members avoid interpersonal problems.

∗ To express the valued goals of the group.

∗ To have a distinctive identify for the group.

A role is a position acted out by a person and the prevailing norms decide the content of a given role. A role has expectations evolved from established norms.

Some of the informal roles are:

∗ *Boundary spanner:* To facilitate and bridge units/groups.

∗ *Buffer:* To filter negative/disappointing news/information which may upset and affect morale

∗ *Lobbyist:* To promote and tell the outsiders the success and importance of the group

∗ *Negotiator:* To make deals and get resource.

∗ *Spokesperson:* To speak on behalf of others

Functional aspects of informal groups

Informal groups help organizations in many ways by complementing the existing formal groups; informal groups make for a more effective total system.

− As some of the tasks are taken over by the informal groups voluntarily, the workload of the management gets reduced.

- Some of the unique abilities of informal groups fill in the gaps of a manager's abilities.

- Informal groups act as safety valves for employees' emotions. The pent-up feelings of employees found a way out through informal groups.

- Communication throughout the organization is made possible/ easier by the informal groups due to their intimate networks.

An analysis of leadership pointed out "informal social networks exert an immense influence which sometimes overrides the formal hierarchy. Leadership goes beyond a person's formal position into realms of informal, hidden or unauthorized influence".

Dysfunctional aspects of informal groups

Informal groups do create problems to the management.

Conflicting objectives: Many a time the goals of informal groups may not fall in line with that of the formal organization as informal groups tend to give more importance to the employees' interests than organization's interests.

Restriction output: Eventhough the individual employees are capable of / interested in putting in more, group norms will prevent them in doing so (as evidenced by Hawthorne's experiments).

Blocking ambition: Individuals' ambitions and the organization's ambitions are pushed behind as the informal group's objectives find a dominant place.

Inertia: Informal groups are known for their lethargy and inaction.

Resistance to change: Resistance put forth by the informal groups is the major hurdle for any change management. Powerful informal groups play a vital role by resisting any change brought out by the organization.

Stages of group development

Studies revealed that the members of a group must go through several stages of development before forming an effective group. The members are expected to know each other, understand their respective roles, compare their individualistic behaviour and learn to coordinate with each other. The following is the five-stage model of group development.

1st Stage: Forming

The first stage is characterized by uncertainty and confusion. The members are not sure about the purpose, structure, task or leadership. However, they try to discover their expectations, evaluate the value of membership, and the importance of leadership. They tend to be polite and the leaders help in setting initial norms.

2nd stage: Storming

It is marked by intra-group conflict and confrontation. Members get emotional. There is disagreement regarding roles/duties. It is really a difficult stage. Members will compete for group roles and influence goals and means.

3rd stage: Norming

In this stage the members try to understand each other and opt for cooperation and coordination. They will have a "we" feeling. Roles are established, team objectives are decided, cohesion is developed and mental models are formed.

4th stage: Performing

At this stage, the group becomes functional. The members commit themselves for effective accomplishment of tasks based on the agreed norms. There is a climate of mutual support and members feel comfortable.

5th stage: Adjourning

In the case of temporary groups, it is the final stage of closing all the activities. The groups as in any project or particular task disband after accomplishing the objectives. In informal groups, their activities come to an end when the members leave the organization.

What is Power?

- Power is the capacity of an individual, team, group or organization to influence others.
- It is the probability that one person within a social setup is in a position to carry out his own will / wish despite resistance from others.
- It is the potential ability to influence behaviour, to change the course of events, to overcome resistance and to make people do things which they normally refuse.

Generally power is not the act of changing others' attitudes or behaviour; it is only the potential to do so. Frequently people do not use their power. Some people might not know that they have certain power(s).

Power, Authority and Influence

Power: The ability to get a person or a group to do something or to change his /their way of doing things.

Authority: It legitimizes power. It is also a source of power. Power need not be legitimate. Authority is the right to manipulate or change others. It is the character of a communication or order in a formal organization which is to be accepted by members of the organization.

Influence: It is the ability to change others in general ways. Though influence and power are involved in the leadership process, influence is more closely associated with leadership than power is.

Example: An underground don may have the power to murder his adversary, but he has no authority to do so. On the other hand a judge may not have the power to catch a criminal on the run and put him behind the bars, but he has the authority to order for the criminal's arrest. Similarly a police officer may have the power to catch a thief but has no authority to mete out any punishment. Religious leaders are capable of influencing people of other religions to get converted to their religions, but they do not have the authority to do so. Many a time their speeches/activities may have certain power to influence the common man.

Thus authority is different from power because of its legitimacy and acceptance and influence is broader than power; but 'power' and 'influence' are used interchangeably. While authority is always legal, power and influence may be legal or illegal depending on the contexts. A drug-peddler influencing a drug-addict to try another variant of the drug is illegal whereas a doctor influencing the drug-addict to come out of drug addiction is legal.

Sources or classification or bases of power

Power can be classified under two categories *i.e.* formal power and personal power. In all there are five sources.

Formal Power:

It is based on an individual's position in an organization. That is, the individual gets these power bases because of the specific authority or roles he/she is assigned in the organization.

Reward Power:

This type of power is based on a person's ability to control resources and reward others. In an organizational setup, managers have many potential rewards such as giving pay increases, promotions, valuable information, favourable assignment, more responsibility, new equipment etc., Because the manager can administer these positive reinforcers, he /she will have power. However, if the managers offer their employees what they (managers) think are rewards [*eg.* promotion with responsibility] but the employees do not value them [*e.g.* they may feel insecure or not prepared to take more responsibility] then managers do not really have reward power. On the same line, managers may not really have rewards to give their employees [they may simply say that they can influence the top management] but as long as the employees believe that the managers can influence the top management then they are considered to have reward power.

Coercive Power:

This power is based on fear. The person with coercive power has the ability to give punishment or to make threats that others believe will result in undesirable consequences. In an organization the managers can use their coercive power through dismissing, demoting, reducing increments *etc.,* A manager can also directly or indirectly threaten the employees. Police officers or vigilance officers wield coercive power.

Legitimate power:

This power represents the formal authority to control and use organizational resources. The employees feel they have obligation to accept this power. It is almost identical to authority and is associated with both reward power and coercive power as the person with legitimacy is in a position to reward as well as punish. However it differs from reward and coercive power as it does not depend on the relationships with others. It completely depends on the position or the role the person plays. In many cases people obtain legitimacy because of their titles/positions such as Major, Executive Director, eldest son and etc rather than personalities or how they affect others. Legitimate power comes from three major sources:

> Prevailing cultural values of a society, organization or group
>
> Accepted social structure and
>
> Being designated as agent / representative of a powerful person / group.

Personal power:

This is the power coming from an individual's unique characteristics or personality and not from one's position. To have personal power there is no need to have any formal position or designation.

Referent Power:

It is the capacity to influence others based on the identification and respect they have for the person who has powers. It develops out of admiration for another and desire to like that person. It comes from within a person. It is largely a function of the person's interpersonal skills and develops slowly. It is usually associated with charismatic leadership. ***Charisma*** is a form of interpersonal attraction whereby followers develop respect for and trust on charismatic individual. In organizations, the managers who depend on referent power must be personally attractive irrespective of their ability to punish or reward. Great personalities like Mahatma Gandhi, Mother Theresa and Luther King had referent power to influence people.

Expert power:

It is an individual's or group's capacity to influence others by possessing knowledge or skills *i.e.* expertise. People must perceive the person to be credible, trustworthy and relevant before expert power is granted. People who are expert in certain areas will have expert power because of their expertise. E.g. Senior lawyers or doctors who are considered as experts in their specialization wield expert power.

Contingencies of power

There is no certainty that all those who have certain power can influence others because power bases (sources) generate power only under certain conditions. These conditions known as contingencies of power include substitutability, centrality, discretion and visibility. These contingencies are not sources of power but they determine the extent to which people use their power bases.

Substitutability: It refers to availability of alternatives. People will have more power when they have monopoly over a valued resource. Conversely, power decreases as the number of alternative source of the critical resource increase. People increase their power through non–substitutability in many ways such as controlling tasks, controlling knowledge, controlling labour and differentiation [creating some sort of uniqueness].

Centrality: It refers to the degree and nature of interdependence between the power holder and other. If people depend more on the power holder power increases.

Discretion: It is the freedom to make judgment *i.e* to make decisions without referring to a specific rule or receiving permission from higher authority. In an organization the lack of discretion makes supervisors mostly powerless eventhough they may have access to certain power.

Visibility: Those who control valued resources or knowledge can use their power only when others are aware of the power bases *i.e.* the power base must be visible. Visibility can be increased by taking up people–oriented jobs or projects that require frequent interactions with top management. Mentoring, where the mentors (seniors) give the

protégés (juniors) meaningful work opportunities and help them meet often, also improves visibility.

Power tactics or types of influence tactics in organizations:

Power tactics are the ways in which people convert their power bases into specific actions to influence others.

Legitimacy: It is relying on one's authority or stressing that a request is in accordance with the organization's policies / rules. It is also known as *silent authority i.e.* influencing behaviour without explicitly referring to legitimate power.

Persuasion: It is using logical arguments, factual evidence, and emotional appeals to convince people that a result is reasonable.

Inspirational appeals: It is developing emotional commitment by appealing to values, needs, hopes and aspirations of a group or organization. Gaining support from higher authority is a result of inspirational appeal.

Coalition formation: It is forming a group to influence others by pooling resources.

Exchange: It is promising benefits or resources in exchange for following or accepting a request.

Personal appeals: It is requesting for compliance based on friendship or loyalty.
Ingratiation / Impression management: It is attempting to increase acceptability using flattery, praise or friendly behaviour.

Assertiveness / Pressure: It is applying legitimate and coercive power and also using warnings, repeated demands and threats.

Consultation: It is increasing the targeted people's motivation and support by involving them in decision–making process.

Characteristics of influenceability of the targets of power

Power involves a reciprocal relationship between the power holder and the targeted people. The degree of influence depends on certain characteristics of the targeted people.
Dependency: The power holder can influence the targeted people to a greater extent if they depend mostly on the power holder. Dependency depends on the extent of importance of the thing(s) one controls, scarcity of the resources and nonsubstitutability of the resources.

Uncertainty: When people are not certain about the appropriateness or correctness of their behaviour they tend to get influenced to a larger extent.

Personality: People who cannot tolerate uncertainty or highly anxious are influenced easily. Those who seek affiliation get influenced by group norms.

Intelligence: Intelligent people, though willing to listen, may resist any attempt to influence them as they tend to be held in high esteem.

Gender: Females are generally considered to be influenced easily but as women's and society's views are changing there appears to be no gender difference.

Age: Social psychologists have reported that susceptibility to influence increases upto 8 – 9 years and then decreases with age until adolescence, when it levels off.

Culture: In some cultures such as western culture which emphasizes individuality and diversity, influenceability is low. In Asian cultures which encourage cohesiveness, agreement and uniformity influenceability   is high.

Organizational Politics

Organizational politics is behaviour of an individual which others perceive as self – serving tactics for the individual's personal gain at the cost of other persons or even the

organization. Political behaviour, which is closely associated with organizational politics are activities of an individual which are not required of the individual's formal role. However, the individual engages in these activities to influence others for personal gain in the organization. Political behaviour is self–serving and not sanctioned by the organization. It is outside one's specified job requirements. People who play politics use their power bases to influence the organizational goals, criteria or processes in decision making. Political behaviour includes withholding key information, forming a coalition, spreading rumors, leaking confidential information, exchanging favours for mutual benefit, lobbying for or against an individual / decision etc.,

Legitimate political behaviour: It refers to normal everyday politics such as complaining to the higher authorities overlooking organizational hierarchy, forming coalitions, obstructing policies / decisions, developing outside contacts to influence people etc.,

Illegitimate political behaviour: These behaviours violate the rules of the organization. The activities include sabotage [destroying], wearing unorthodox dress to exhibit protest, applying for mass leave etc.,

Nature of Organizational Politics

- Politics in organization is a fact of life. There is politics in every group / organization.
- Personal experiences, hunches and anecdotes have shown that organizational behaviour is often political in nature.
- Politics is not a simple process: It varies from organization to organization and even from unit to unit within an organization.
- Organizations are composed of groups [coalition] which compete with one another for resources resulting in politics.
- The groups [coalitions] always seek to protect their interests, positions and power and hence indulge in politics.

- Unequal distribution of power results in dehumanizing leading to different political behaviour.

Factors which encourage organizational politics

There are certain areas that are relevant to the degree to which organization are political rather than rational.

Resources: There will be more politics when the resources are critical or their availability is low. New and 'unclaimed' resources will also create politics.

Decisions: Uncertain decisions, ambiguous decisions, decisions where there is no agreement and long range strategic decisions encourage politics.

Goals: When the goals are not clear or ambiguous people will play politics.

Technology and external environment: There will be politics when the technology adopted is highly complex and the external environ is volatile / turbulent.

Organizational change: People play politics to resist any change. Any attempt for reorganization or to bring in planned organizational development leads to politics.

How managers play politics?

DuBrin provided a relevant list of strategies adopted by modern managers to play organizational politics:

Maintain alliances with powerful people: It is to show that he alone can win in any politics because of his connections.

Embrace or Demolish: Accept employees and encourage them if they are productive otherwise remove them as disgruntled people will join together to create politics.

Divide and rule: It is an age-old tactic to manage the subordinates.

Manipulate classified information: It is leaking or withholding important information depending on situation/people.

Make a quick showing: It is showing some quick, objective improvements in the quality of a product, service or process to make impression.

Collect and use IOUs: The power seeker should do some favour to others making it clear that they return the favour when needed.

Avoid decisive engagement: It is going slow and easy without ruffling feathers. [not affecting other's ego / esteem]

Attacking and blaming others: It is the way of passing the buck.

Progress one step at a time: It is a form of slow-tactic to drive the contenders away from the scene.

Wait for a crisis: A manager's capability is appreciated only in a crisis or emergency.

Take counsel with caution: To maintain that he is 'all in all' the manager must be careful in seeking counsel from others.

Be aware of resource dependence: It is making subordinates to depend on resource over which the manager alone has access.

Consequences of organizational politics

Organizational politics, when exceeds certain limits, lead to:

- Decreased job satisfaction
- Increased anxiety and stress
- Increased turnover
- Reduced performance

Defensive Behaviours:

When employees feel that they are affected by organizational politics they resort to defensive behaviours. These are reactive and protective behaviours to avoid action, blame or change. Defensive feelings are often associated with negative feelings toward the job and work environment. In the short run, employees may feel that their self interests are protected, but in the long run they get tired of the defensive behaviour. Continued defensive behaviour may result in losing the trust and support of their peers, bosses, employees and clients.

Types of Defensive Behaviours

Avoiding action

Over conforming: Very strictly following the rules and regulations.

Buck passing: Transferring responsibility to others.

Playing dumb: Pleading ignorance or inability.

Stretching: Purposely prolonging a task.

Stalling: Support openly but not putting any personal efforts.

Avoiding Blame

Buffing: Elaborately documenting one's activities to create an image of competence or thoroughness.

Playing safe: Avoiding risky tasks and taking a position of neutrality in conflicts.

Justifying: Creating explanations for failures.

Scapegoating: Blaming others for one's own failure.

Misrepresenting: Manipulation of information.

Avoiding change

Prevention: Trying to prevent a threatening change

Self–protection: Protecting one's self–interest by guarding information or other resources.

How to overcome negative impact of organizational politics?

To help overcome the negative impact of organizational politics the following guidelines are outlined:

➢ Encouraging Open communication – Being role models with nonpolitical and ethical behaviour.

➢ Monitoring closely the activities of game players

➢ Taking care of individual's privacy

➢ Always questioning "is it ethical and fair'

➢ Implementing rules/regulations strictly, particularly, in allocation of resources

➢ Managing changes through education and involvement

➢ Curtailing self-serving influence activities

➢ Keeping employees informed of all events

Conflict Management

What is Conflict?

Conflict is a process in which one person/group/organization feels/perceives that its interests or needs are opposed/challenged or negatively affected or about to be affected by other person/group/organization. Conflict occurs at different levels *viz* organizational, intergroup, interpersonal and intra personal.

How Conflict is viewed?

∗ *Traditional view:* Any conflict is harmful to individual/group/organization and must be avoided

– It is seen as a dysfunctional outcome resulting from poor communication, lack of openness, trust and failure of managers to attend to the needs and aspirations of their employees.

– It emphasizes that causes of conflict must be identified and corrected to improve performance.

This view is not supported by many researchers and practicing consultants.

∗ *Human Relations View:*

– Conflict is natural and occurs in all groups and organizations.

– As conflict is inevitable it must be accepted.

– It cannot be eliminated.

– Sometimes conflict may improve the group's performance.

∗ *Interactionist View:*

– Conflict must be encouraged as peaceful and cooperative group becomes static and nonresponsive to change and innovation.

– When there is no conflict, things are taken for granted and only routine work continues.

This view does not suggest that all conflicts are good. Some conflicts are functional *i.e.* they support the goals of the group and improve its performance.

There are some conflicts, which hinder group performance; these are dysfunctional or destructive.

Types of Conflict

Whether a conflict is functional or dysfunctional depends on the type of conflict. There are different types of conflict.

Task Conflict: It is related to the content and goals of the work. Low to moderate levels of task conflict increases group performance as it stimulates discussion and generates new ideas to perform certain tasks.

Process Conflict: It is concerned with how the work gets done. For process conflict to be functional and productive, it must be kept at low level. When there is intense argument about who should do, what should be done or when to be done it becomes dysfunctional.

Relationship Conflict: It focuses on interpersonal relationships. This conflict is always dysfunctional. Friction and interpersonal animosity inherent in relationship conflicts increase personality clashes and decrease mutual understanding hindering completion of organizational tasks.

Stages of Conflict

Five stages have been identified in conflict process *viz.* Latent, Cognition, Intention, Behaviour and Outcomes.

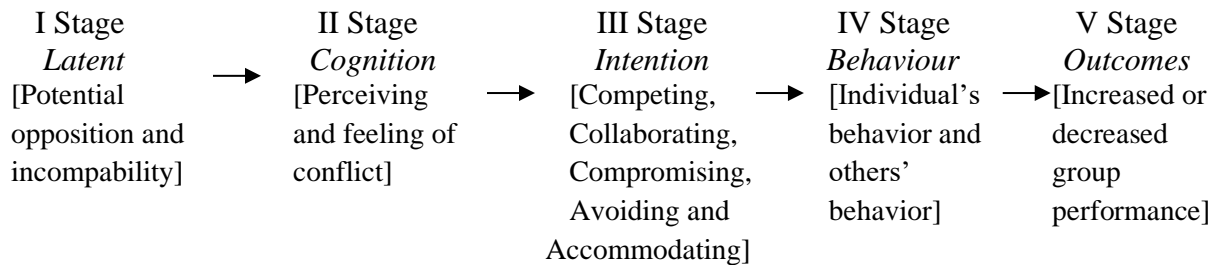| I Stage	II Stage	III Stage	IV Stage	V Stage
Latent	*Cognition*	*Intention*	*Behaviour*	*Outcomes*
[Potential opposition and incompability]	[Perceiving and feeling of conflict]	[Competing, Collaborating, Compromising, Avoiding and Accommodating]	[Individual's behavior and others' behavior]	[Increased or decreased group performance]

Fig: The Conflict Process

I stage: Latent and Potential Opposition of Incompatibility

This is the initial stage where conditions prevail to create opportunities for conflict. The conditions or causes or sources of conflict are goals, values, tasks, resources, rules,

21

communication, structure of organization and personal variables. When individuals differ in their ideas/perceptions toward goals, values, tasks, rules, allocation of resources and structure of organization and when the communication is not open there is potential for conflict.

II Stage: Cognition (perceiving and feeling of conflict)

At the second stage, the parties perceive that there is conflict as one's statements and actions are not compatible with others. When the parties feel there is conflict they get emotional leading to anxiety, tension, frustration or hostility.

III Stage: Intention

Knowing one party's intentions is essential to understand how he/she responds to other's behavior. Many conflicts arise merely by one party attributing the wrong intentions to the other party

The five conflict handling intentions are:

Competing: It is one person seeking to satisfy his own desire regardless of other's interest.

Collaborating: Here parties try to solve a problem by clarifying differences rather than by accommodating various views.

Compromising: It is sharing of interests. There is no clear winner or loser. Each party gives up something.

Avoiding: It is trying to ignore a conflict and avoiding others in the conflict.

Accommodating: It is self-sacrificing *i.e.* supporting the opponent's views inspite of not liking them.

IV Stage: Behaviour

Conflicts become visible at this stage. It includes statements, actions and reactions. Behaviour ranges from minor disagreements through challenging, verbal attacks, threats, and physical attacks to destroying the opponent.

V Stage: Outcomes

Positive: Positive outcome leads to improvement in quality of decisions, stimulation of creativity, encouragement of curiosity, better communication, releasing of tension, self-evaluation and change.

Negative: Negative outcomes are discontent, reduced group effectiveness, retardation of communication, subordination of group's goals to individual's goals, threatening group's survival. There will be more of absenteeism, turnover and stress.

Sources of Conflict in Organizations

In organizations there are many sources which manifest conflict.

Incompatible goals: Differences in personal goals or vast variation between the individual's goals and that of the organization lead to conflict.

Diversity of human resource: Different values, beliefs, experiences and training due to diversified cultures, gender difference, generation gap etc may result in conflicting ideas.

Interdependence of tasks: When group members are to share common inputs, interact with each other at every stage for completion of a process, receive rewards determined by other's performance or wait for other's output to initiate a process there will be conflicts. Higher the interdependence more will be the chances for conflicts.

Limited resources: When resources are limited and parties struggle to get the scarce resources, there will be conflicts.

Ambiguous rules: Absence of clear-cut rules and lack of demarcation of goals, responsibility or authority are potential sources of conflict.

Lack of communication: Many a time lack of opportunity, ability or motivation to communicate results in misunderstanding leading to conflicts.

General Categories of Conflicts in Organization.

The major categories of conflicts are intraindividual conflict and interactive conflict.

23

Intraindividual conflict

Conflict due to frustration:

Frustration occurs when a person's motivated drive is blocked before he reaches a desired goal. The barrier may be physical or mental [socio-psychological]. The results could be aggression, withdrawal or compromise.

Goal Conflict:

In goal conflict two or more motives block one another.

Types of goal conflict are.

(a) Approach-approach conflict: In this conflict the individual has two or more positive but mutually exclusive goals to decide. That is two or more good things are available but one has to choose only one. *E.*g. When an IIT graduate gets selected to do a master's programe in management in Harvard University as well as London School of Economics he/she will be in a dilemma to select.

(b) Approach-avoidance conflict: The individual is motivated to seek the goal but at the same time encouraged to avoid it. This occurs when the same goal contains both positive and negative consequences. *E.*g. The Indian parents want their only daughter to get educated in USA but they are worried about the American culture of freedom.

(c) Avoidance-avoidance conflict: Here, the individual has to avoid two or more negative but mutually exclusive goals. *E.*g. A HR specialist does not like to work in IT sector or Hospitality sector, but he has good offers from companies in these sectors.

Role Conflict:

Every person plays different roles [as manager, counselor, union leader, spokesperson, etc] and these roles carry different demands and expectations. These different roles lead to conflict. *E.*g. When a finance manager is elected as the secretary of employees' welfare association he faces a conflict. Will he ask for more salary for the employees or will he advise the management to curtail expenses.

Person-role conflict: It is the conflict between one's personality and the expectations of his role. *E.*g. An introvert appointed as a public relation manager.

Intrarole conflict: It is created by contradictory expectations about how a role should be played. *E.g.* The chairman of a company wants the HR manager to deal with the striking employees with iron gloves whereas the M.D wants him to soft pedal the issue.

Interrole conflict: This conflict occurs due to differing requirements of two or more roles that must be played at the same time. *E.g.* A career woman is expected to be a caring mother of her new born baby all the time.

Interactive conflict

Interpersonal conflict: This conflict is mostly attributed to personality problem.

Personal difference: As people differ in their family background, upbringing, socialization process, education, values etc there will be always disagreement leading to conflicts

Information deficiency: Lack of communication or misinformation creates conflict.

Role incompatibility: Overlapping of roles and highly interdependent roles are major sources of conflict as everyone wants to do his own role adequately.

Environmental stress: Scarce or shrinking resources, downsizing, pressures due to competition, high degree of uncertainty etc are sources of stress-induced conflict.

Intergroup conflict:

Competition for resources*:* Groups within the organization compete for budget allocation, space, supplies, personnel and support services.

Task interdependence: When two groups depend on one another in a mutual way or in one-way direction there will be conflicts. The more diverse the objective, priorities and personnel of the interdependent groups, the more conflict tends to be.

Jurisdictional ambiguity: This arises due to overlapping of responsibilities. Conflict occurs when one group tries to take more control or take credit for desirable activities or give up its part for any responsibility for undesirable activities.

Status*:* Conflict arises when one group tries to attain a higher status which is seen as a threat to other group. When one group feels that it is being treated inequitably in terms of rewards, job assignments, working conditions, privileges or status symbols there tends to be conflicts.
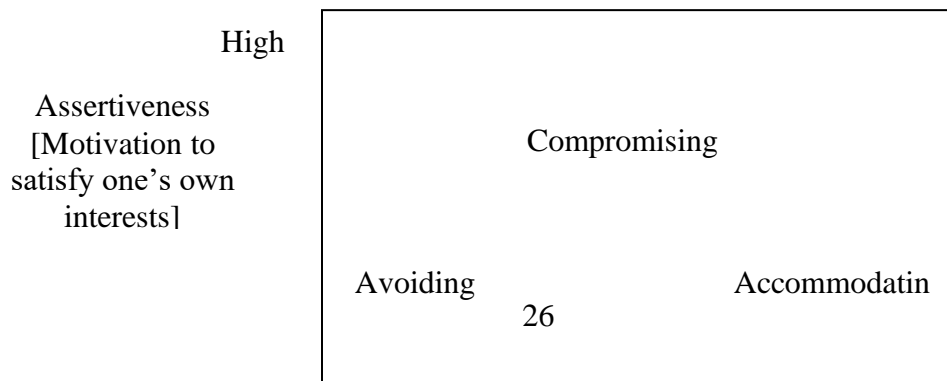
Managing conflicts

Conflicts can be solved through interpersonal approach as well as structural approach.

Interpersonal conflict management style

In managing conflict, some attempt a win-win orientation. It is the perception that the opposing parties will find a mutually beneficial solution to their disagreement. The parties feel that the resources are expandable if they work together to find a creative solution.

Some others go in for a win-lose orientation. They believe that the resources are fixed and when one party gets more the other gets less. Conflicts tend to increase when a win-lose orientation is adopted because people tend to rely on power and politics. Win-lose orientation may be appropriate when the goals of each party are not perfectly opposing.

Generally there are five styles of conflict managements based on the person's concern for his/her own interests and concern for other party's interests. Among the five styles, problem solving is the only style representing a purely win-win orientation. The other four types represent variations of win-lose orientation.

High

Assertiveness
[Motivation to
satisfy one's own
interests]

Compromising

Avoiding   Accommodatin

26

Low

Low   High

Cooperativeness
[Motivation to satisfy other party's interests]

Interpersonal conflict management styles

Avoiding: This approach is to avoid conflict situations altogether. It represents a low concern for both self and the other party. In short, the parties try to suppress thinking about the conflict. The parties may rearrange their work area or tasks to minimize interaction. As far as management is concerned it just ignores that there is conflict.

Competing: Here, the opposing parties try to win at the cost of each other. They try to be assertive to get their own way. It is a strongest win-lose orientation.

Accommodating: This involves accepting the other party's views/wishes without bothering for its own interest. There will be unilateral concessions and unconditional promises without any expectations. It is a total sacrifice of one party.

Compromising: It is an approach where a party's gains are affected equally by losses. It is searching for a middle ground between the interests of the two parties. Both the parties lose as well as gain equally.

Problem solving: It is finding a mutually beneficial solution for both the parties. Information sharing is an important aspect of this style. It is purely a win-win solution.

Choosing the best style:

The best style of conflict management is mostly decided by situational factors.

Problem solving style is the most preferred one in many situations as it optimizes the value for both the parties; it works well only when both parties have mutual trust and share information openly.

Avoiding though looks ineffective, is actually the best approach when conflict becomes socioemotional or negotiation is costlier than conflict resolution. However, avoidance should not be prolonged because it will increase the frustration of other party.

Competing style may be necessary when the party feels it is highly correct and confident and the dispute requires a quick solution. It is also necessary when the other party resorts to unethical behavior.

Accommodating style may be appropriate when the other party has more power and the issue is also not so important. But this may result in the winning party to seek more and more in future. In the long run, this style may lead to more conflicts.

Compromising is inevitable when both the parties have equal power and are under pressure to settle the issues. It is rarely a final solution as the parties always look for favorable solution.

Structural approaches to conflict management

Conflict management styles are concerned with how the opposing parties approach a conflict. But conflicts can also be resolved though structural changes.

Concentrating on superordinate goals: Superordinate goals are the common goals such as for the very survival of the organization itself, which are more important than the conflicting goals of individuals or groups. By laying more emphasis on superordinate goals, the conflicts of individuals or the competing groups, can be minimized.

Reducing employee's diversity: As different backgrounds, such as education, experience, culture etc are the root-causes of many conflicts in an organization, reducing the differentiation through common experiences may help reduce conflict. It starts from selection of employees and training.

Increasing resources: As scarcity of resources causes conflicts, increasing the resources such as men, materials, machinery etc would help reduce disputes among the individuals/groups. Though the decision makers may not agree as it involves more money, a careful comparison is necessary between the costs of increasing resources and the costs of dysfunctional conflict.

Reducing task interdependence: Depending on others, generally, causes frustration resulting in conflict. To the maximum extent interdependence must be reduced to avoid conflicts.

Adequate communication: Though communication is the best way to resolve conflicts it is effective only when the differentiation between the opposing parties is low. Sometimes direct communication is a risky strategy as it threatens personal egos.

Clarifying rules and procedures: When rules, procedures, responsibilities and authority are clear without any ambiguity, the chances of conflict are less as everyone will try to work within one's boundary without trespassing into others.

The Contents in this E-Material has been taken from the text and reference book as given in the syllabus