

Organizational Conflict and Stress

1. Define functional conflict.

The type of conflict that brings in positive consequences and supports the goal of the group is known as functional conflict. Functional conflict is thus a form of constructive conflict.

2. What is conflict?

Conflict is a situation in which two or more parties feel themselves in opposition. In other words, conflict is a process in which an effort is purpose fully made by one person or unit to block another that results in frustrating the attainment of other goals or the furthering of his or her interests.

3. Enumerate the nature of conflict.

The key features that enumerate the nature of conflicts are enlisted as follows:

- There remain mutually exclusive goals;
- There exists two type of perception;
- There must be intentional effort;
- Conflict exists either at the latent or overt level.

4. What are the major causes of conflict?

The major causes of conflict are listed below:

- Inadequate communication;
- Delayed information;
- Effects of filtration;
- Barriers of culture, language;
- Inadequate training of sender and receiver;
- Problem of noise

5. List out the different types of conflict.

The different types of conflict are enlisted as follows:

- Intra-personal conflict (conflict within the individual)
- Intra-personal conflict (conflict between two or more individual)
- Inter-group conflict (conflict between different group)
- Inter-organizational conflict (conflict between two dependent organizations)

6. What are the positive consequences of conflict?

The key positive consequences of conflict are enlisted as follows:

- Conflicts is a major stimulant for change.
- Conflict help to avoid group thinking.
- Conflict fosters creativity and innovation.
- Conflict often develops cohesion and satisfaction.

7. What are the negative consequences of conflict?

The key negative consequences of conflict are enlisted as follows:

- Conflict is one of the key reasons of stress in people;
- Conflict diversifies group time and energy in winning the conflict rather than the achievement of organizational goals;
- Conflict brings tensions in the organization leading to instability and chaos.

8. Enlist the stages of conflict.

A general conflict process normally goes through five key stages enlisted as follows:

- Stage 1: Potential opposition or incompatibility
- Stage-2: Cognition and personalization
- Stage-3: Intentions/conflict resolution style
- Stage-4: Behaviour
- Stage-5: Outcomes

9. What is inter-group conflict?

When the conflict involves two or more group it is known as inter-group conflict. For example: when whole marketing department is in conflict with production department, it is referred as inter-group conflict.

10. Explain the nature and sources of conflicts.

Nature and Sources of Conflicts

Conflict can arise from a variety of sources. They can be classified into two broad categories: structural factors, which stem from the nature of the organization and the way in which work is organized and personal factors, which arise from differences among individuals. The causes/sources of conflict can be summarized within two categories.

Structural Factors

1. Specialization: When jobs are highly specialized, employees become experts at certain tasks. For example, in case of a software company, while there is one specialist for databases, another for statistical packages, and yet another for expert system. As the highly

specialized people have little awareness of the tasks that others perform, such a case leads to conflict among the specialists.

- A. Interdependence: Interdependence occurs when two or more groups depend on each other to accomplish their tasks. Depending on other people to work done is good when the process works smoothly. However, when problem arises, it becomes easy to blame other party, and as such, conflict escalates. The potential of conflict increases as the degree of interdependence increases.
- B. Goal differences: Sometimes different work groups having different goals have incompatible goals. For example, in a cable television company, the salesperson's goal is to sell as many new installations as possible. This can create problem for the service department, because their goal is to do timely installations.

Personal factors

1. Skills and abilities: Work force in an organization/department is composed of people with varying levels of skills and abilities. Such diversity in skills and abilities leads to conflict, especially when jobs are interdependent. Workers may find it difficult to work with a new boss, fresh from University knowing a lot about managing people but unfamiliar with the technology they are working.
 - A. Personalities: Personality also causes individual differences. It is differences in personality that neither the manager likes all of his co-managers and subordinates nor all of them like the manager. This creates conflict among them. Research studies report that usually an abrasive personality is rejected by others. An abrasive person is one who ignores the interpersonal aspects of work and feelings of colleagues.
- Perception: Differences in perceptions can also lead to conflict. One area in which perception can, for example, differ may be the perception of what motivates employees. Managers, for example, usually provide what they think employees want rather than what employees really want.
 - Values and ethics: People also hold different beliefs and adhere to different value system. Older workers, for example, value company loyalty and probably do not take a sick day when they are not really sick/ill. But, the younger workers, valuing mobility, may be take a sick day to get away from work.
 - Emotion: The moods of the people can also be a source of conflict in the work place. Problems of home often spill over into the work arena, and the related moods can be hard for others to deal with.
 - Communication barriers: Communication barriers such as physical separation and language can create distortions in message, and these, in turn, can lead to conflict value judgment also sometimes serves as barrier.

11. Explain the concept of inter-group conflict? Enlist its types. Explain the dynamics of inter-group conflict.

Inter-Group Conflict

When there is a conflict between two different groups of an organization, it is called as inter-group conflict. Conflict between marketing and finance group in an organization is an example of inter-group conflict. The concepts of inter-group conflict can be explained through below given points.

1. There are distortions of perception, related to one's own group and about the other group. Firstly, perception of one's own group is highly selective: people see only the best aspects of their own group and deny any weakness. Secondly, perception of the other groups is systematically distorted: group see only the worst parts of other groups and deny other groups positive accomplishments. Thus, inter group conflict leads to increased use of stereotypes. Each group develops more positive stereotype of itself and a more negative of other.
2. Interaction and communication between groups decreases. As group members feel hostile toward members of rival group, there is less desire for interaction with them. Moreover, decreased interaction. Makes it easier for each group to maintain its negative stereotype of the other.

Even when group are forced to interact with each other, those interactions become fairly rigid and formal. Whatever information is passed between groups is carefully rationed and sometimes deliberately distorted. Groups tend to ignore the similarities between their positions and exaggerate the differences.

- There is a shift from problem-solving orientation toward other groups to a win-lose orientation. There are various facts to this shift in orientation. First, there is a much clearer distinction drawn between the groups, resulting in a "we-they" rather than a "We-versus'-the problem" orientation. Second, all exchange with the other groups are evaluated in terms of victory or defeat. Third, the other group tends to see the problem only from their own point of view, rather than in terms of the needs of both groups. Fourth, the parties emphasize the benefits of winning the conflicts in the short run and tends to ignore the long-term consequences of the conflict for the relationship between the groups.
- As a result of negative stereotyping, decreased communication between groups, win-lose orientation, etc. hostility inevitably occurs between rival groups. Members of the other group are seen as the enemy, and deserving of hostile attacks.

Types of Inter-Group Conflicts

The primary types of inter-group conflict are listed as follows:

1. Functional conflict: Conflict that supports the goals of the group and improve its performance.
 - A. Dys-functional conflicts: Conflict that hinders group performance
 - B. Task conflict: Conflict over content and goals of the work
 - C. Relationship conflict: Conflict based on interpersonal relationships

D. Process conflict: Conflict over how work gets done
The Dynamics of Inter-Group Conflict

When conflicts takes place between group the following dynamism can be seen:

1. Changes within each group: When there will be inter-group conflict, the following changes are seen within each group. Each group now tries to make them strong to meet the hurdles created, by other group. In this regard, one can observe following scenarios.
 - A. Loyalty to the group becomes more important: In the face of an external threat, the group demands more loyalty from individual members. Not only is social interaction with people outside the group not encouraged; it is expressly discouraged. Such interaction could lead to inadvertent betrayal of group strategy and secrets. Deviance is more closely monitored and punished.
 - B. There is increased concern for task accomplishment: When there is inter-group conflict, the group members becomes more concerned for accomplishing the task. There will be less informal relation among group members but high formal relation among group members.
 - C. Leadership in the group becomes autocratic: When inter-group conflict is present it is especially important for a group to be able to respond quickly and in a unified manner to the

activities of other groups. A democratic work style can reduce the group's capacity to respond quickly. Hence, the leadership usually switches to autocracy.

- The organization and structure of the group becomes more rigid: After the inter-group conflict among the groups, each group is concerned in making the group effective. There will be rigid organizational structure with more focus on formal relation. Moreover, tasks are highly valued.
 - Group cohesiveness (degree of unity) is increased: In the face of an external threat, past differences and difficulties between group members are forgotten. The group closes ranks to meet the challenge. Individual group members find both the group as whole and other group members more attractive.

Changes in Relations between Groups:

- Interaction and communication between group decreases
- There are distortions of perception, both one's own group and about the other group
- There is a shift from a problem-solving orientation toward other groups to a win lose orientation
- There is increased hostility forward the rival group.

12. Describe the approaches of conflict management.

Approaches to Conflict Management

Conflict arises from different source. It is inevitable to avoid conflict in organization setting. So with appropriate technique, conflict should be managed. There are different approaches to manage conflict. Some of the highly adopted approaches of conflict management are explained below.

1. **Dominance:** Dominance is the easiest technique to manage conflict. In this technique manager will eliminate the conflicting parties. By, dismissing the conflicting parties, the conflict can be managed. This is, however a short-term solution.
2. **Avoidance:** Conflict can be managed by avoiding it. In this technique one party avoids the conflict and let the conflicting parties to win. Moreover, redefining the goals and not making over-lapping goals helps to manage conflict.
3. **Smoothing:** In this technique, the differences between two parties are disguised while similarities are highlighted. This make both the part feel that they are not much apart. This shared viewpoint enhances the possibility of working together for common goals.
4. **Compromise:** In this technique the conflicting parties compromise with each other on certain points. The party provides something else to other parties in exchange for the desired outcomes.

If the desired outcome is not achieved conflict again rises. Hence, this is also a temporary solution.

- **Hierarchical decision-making:** In this technique, a common superior can be requested to use his authority to resolve conflict. However, it is very widely accepted technique that loses its goodness when the authority figure fails to understand the issue properly and the subordinates do not respect them.
- **System restructuring:** By restructuring system, one can often manage the conflict in the organization.

It involves clarifying demands and segregating roles in different position, and people can resolve role conflict.

- **Bargaining:** In this technique parties in conflict bargain each other to solve the conflict. Here the use of bargaining power is highly used.

13. What do you understand by conflict? Examine their negative and positive outcomes in organization.

Meaning of Conflict

Conflict is a situation in which two or more parties feel themselves in opposition. In other words, conflict is a process in which an effort is purpose fully made by one person or unit to block another that results in frustrating the attainment of other goals or the furthering of his or her interests.

Positive Outcomes of Conflict

More often conflict leads to certain positive outcomes. A few of them are:

1. It provides as individual a chance to think again, undertake self-introspection and have a second look at the existing things, be they procedures, policies, equipment, behaviors etc. In this regard, conflict is a major stimulant for change.
 2. It leads to innovation and at times, to new direction. It is therefore, even necessary for organization survival and growth.
 3. It helps seek classification and generate search behavior.
 4. At times, conflict is also used as means to certain ends and creates confusion or set subordinates against each other in order to maintain the interested party's own position. It may not be a positive outcome in the strict sense of the term from the organizational point of view, but it is certainly a management strategy toward off problems temporarily. It may be viewed as an unavoidable cost of the pursuit of one's aspiration.
- When conflict is developed, attention is immediately drawn to the malfunction parts of a system. It is an indication that the situation calls for improvement. Conflicts are, therefore, an essential portion of a cyber-native system.
 - It energizes people and leads to mild stimulation. Moreover, it helps the employees to test their capacities.
 - It serves as a cementing force in a group and incredible unity is witnessed even in a heterogeneous group in times of tension.
 - For some. It is exhilarating, provides endless challenge and meaning to their lives. Negative Outcomes of Conflict

Many times conflicts may be detrimental and disastrous. A few of such circumstances in which it can be termed as harmful and undesirable are discussed below.

1. When conflict does not lead to solution of a problem, it is unproductive and investment of time and effort goes waste.
2. It is undesirable if it creates a climate of distrust and suspicion among people, if some people feel defeated and if it develops antagonism instead of spirit of cooperation.
3. When management loses objectivity and treats disagreement as equivalent to disloyalty and rebellion, an opportunity for creativity should be deemed to have been lost. It may even pour oil over troubled waters; exploit differences to strengthen itself and weaken other, and accept resolution capable of different interpretations.
4. In an attempt to find a solution, management may gloss over serious difference and suppress certain feelings which may except at inappropriate moments and hit safe targets.
5. In the event of a conflict, there may be intensification of internalization of sub unit goals which may result in the neglect of overall organizational goals.

Functional and Dysfunctional Conflicts

Functional conflicts and dysfunctional conflicts are the two dimensions or the outcomes of the conflicts. Functional conflict has positive effects on the conflicts whereas dysfunctional conflict has negative effects. Both can be discussed with the help of following points:

1. Functional Conflict: Positive Effects

Functional conflict is also known as constructive conflict. Such conflict will have positive effects on individuals, groups and organizations. Such conflict is useful in order to solve problems related to individuals and groups. Functional conflict is important for effective performance due to the following reasons:

- It ventilates tension from the organization.
- It increases individual's efforts at work.
- It helps thinking analytically.
- It provides foundation for organizational change and development.
- It provides an individual a chance to think again, undertake self introspection and have a second look at the existing things, like procedures, policies, equipment, behaviors etc.
- It leads to innovation and at times to new direction. It is, therefore, even necessary for the survival and growth organizations.
- It helps to seek classification and generate search behavior.
- When conflict is developed, attention is immediately drawn to the malfunctioning parts of a system. It is an indication that the situation calls for improvement. Conflict is, therefore, an essential portion of a cybernetic system.
- At times, it is also used as a means to certain ends and to create confusion or set subordinates against each other in order to maintain the interested parties own position. It may not be a positive outcome in the strict sense of the term from the organizational point of view, but it is certainly a management strategy toward of problems temporarily. It may be viewed as an unavoidable cost of the pursuit of one's aspirations.
- Long standing problems, which continue to agitate people's mind in surface, they are able to release their tensions and unburden themselves. They display creativity in identifying solutions and dealing with problems.
- It serves as a cementing force in a group and incredible unity is witnessed even in a heterogeneous group at times of tension.
- It energizes people, leads to mild stimulation and one is at one's best in times of crisis. It helps them test their capacities.

2. Dysfunctional Conflict: Negative Effects

Dysfunctional conflict is also known as destructive conflict. Many times conflict may be detrimental and disastrous. Such conflict has negative effect on individuals, groups and the organizational levels. The effects might be diverting energies, hurting group cohesion, promoting interpersonal hostilities and creating negative working environment. Due to the dysfunctional conflict and its negative effects, employees become dissatisfied with the working environment and as a result, absenteeism will increase and productivity will decline. A few dysfunctional effects of rising conflict include:

- Increasing conflict will result in delays in meeting schedules, decrease in the quality of goods and services and finally will increase customer complaints.
- It is undesirable if it creates a climate of distrust and suspicion among people, if some people feel are defeated and demanded and it develops antagonism instead of spirit of cooperation.
- In the absence of smooth communication at the workplace, there will be problems in coordinating activities.
- With the increasing conflict in the organization, people start to divert themselves from the real work schedule and keep less interest and show less energy, and this will ultimately affect the achievement of organizational goals.
- The increasing negative emotions at the workplace can be quite stressful.
- When conflict does not lead to solution of a problem, it is unproductive and investment of time and effort goes waste.
- As a consequence of conflict, there may be intensification of internalization of sub-unit goals which may result in the neglect of overall organizational goals.
- It is seriously harmful if it distracts attention from basic organizational objectives and makes people work for their defeat.
- When management loses objectivity and treats disagreement as equivalent to disloyalty and rebellion, an opportunity for creativity should be deemed to have been lost. It may even pour oil over troubled waters, exploit differences to strengthen itself and weakens others, and accept resolutions capable of different interpretation.

What is Stress?

Like motivation, stress is a very individual experience. One person can feel extreme pressure and anxiety over a task that is looming, and another might look at the same task and see it as an exciting challenge. In spite of that, we've seen an overall jump in the number of people that report stress on the job, and we can see how it's taking its toll.

Stress is a dynamic condition, and it exists when an individual is confronted with an opportunity, constraint or demand related to what he or she desires, and for which the outcome is perceived to be both uncertain and important.

Causes of stress

If you poll a group of individuals about what their biggest stressors are, they're likely to give you these four answers:

- Money
- Work
- Family responsibilities
- Health concerns

In most surveys on stress and its causes, these four responses have been at the top of the list for quite a long time, and I'm sure you weren't surprised to read them. But managers should take pause when they realize that all four of these are either directly or indirectly impacted by the workplace.

Still, there are so many differences among individuals and their stressors. Why is one person's mind-crippling stress another person's biggest motivation and challenge? We're going to attempt to answer this by looking at the three sources of stress—individual, organizational, and environmental—and then add in the concept of human perception in an attempt to understand this conundrum.





Individual Factors

The first of three sources of stress are individual. Individuals may experience stressful commutes to work, or a stressful couple of weeks helping at a work event, but those kinds of temporary, individual stresses are not what we're looking at here. We're looking for a deeper, longer-term stress. Family stress—marriages that are ending, issues with children, an ailing parent—these are stressful situations that an employee really can't leave at home when he or she comes to work. Financial stress, like the inability to pay bills or an unexpected new demand on a person's cash flow might also be an issue that disturbs an employee's time at work. Finally, an individual's own personality might actually contribute to his or her stress. People's dispositions—how they perceive things as negative or positive—can be a factor in each person's stress as well.

Organizational Factors

- **Task or role demands:** these are factors related to a person's role at work, including the design of a person's job or working conditions. A stressful task demand might be a detailed, weekly presentation to the company's senior team. A stressful role demand might be where a person is expected to achieve more in a set amount of time than is possible.
- **Interpersonal demands:** these are stressors created by co-workers. Perhaps an employee is experiencing ongoing conflict with a co-worker he or she is expected to collaborate closely with. Or maybe employees are experiencing a lack of social support in their roles.
- **Organizational structure:** this refers to the level of differentiation within an organization, the degree of rules and regulations, and where decisions are made. If employees are unable to participate in decisions that affect them, they may experience stress.
- **Organizational leadership:** this refers to the organization's style of leadership, particularly the managerial style of its senior executives. Leaders can create an environment of tension, fear and anxiety and can exert unrealistic pressure and control. If employees are afraid they'll be fired for not living up to leadership's standards, this can definitely be a source of stress.

- **Organizational life stage:** an organization goes through a cycle of stages (birth, growth, maturity, decline). For employees, the birth and decline of an organization can be particularly stressful, as those stages tend to be filled with heavy workloads and a level of uncertainty about the future.

Environmental Factors

Finally, there are environmental sources of stress. The economy may be in a downturn, creating uncertainty for job futures and bank accounts. There may be political unrest or change creating stress. Finally, technology can cause stress, as new developments are constantly making employee skills obsolete, and workers fear they'll be replaced by a machine that can do the same. Employee are also often expected to stay connected to the workplace 24/7 because technology allows it.

As a side note, it's important to understand that these stressors are additive. In other words, stress builds up, and new elements add to a person's stress level. So a single element of stress might not seem important in itself, but when added to other stresses the worker is experiencing, it can, as the old adage says, be the straw that broke the camel's back.

Individual Differences



Those are the sources of stress, but differences within an individual determine whether that stress will be positive or negative. Those individual differences include

- **Perception.** This is what moderates the individual's relationship to the stressor. For instance, one person might see a potential layoff as a stressful situation, while another person might see that same layoff as an opportunity for a nice severance package and the opportunity to start a new business.
- **Job Experience.** Because stress is associated with turnover, it would stand to reason that those employees with a long tenure are the most stress-resistant of the bunch.

- **Social Support.** Co-workers, especially those who are caring or considered to be friends, can help protect a fellow employee against the effects of stress.
- **Belief in the locus of control.** Those who have a high internal locus of control (those that believe they are in control of their own fate) are, unsurprisingly, not as affected by stress as those who feel they are not in control.
- **Self-efficacy.** Self-efficacy is an individual's belief that he or she can complete a task. Research shows that employees who have strong levels of self-efficacy are more resistant to the effects of stress.
- **Hostility.** Some employees carry around a high level of hostility as a part of their personalities, and they're often suspicious and distrustful of their co-workers. These personality traits make a person more susceptible to stress.

MANAGEMENT OF STRESS:

What is stress management in Organisational Behaviour?

Stress management is defined as **the tools, strategies, or techniques that reduce stress and reduce the negative impacts stress has on your mental or physical well-being.** A variety of techniques can be used to manage stress. These include mental, emotional, and behavioral strategies.