



A STUDY ON MANAGING CONFLICT THROUGH CONFLICT RESOLUTION MODELS

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Abstract: Organisation is a combination of different skilled people working towards a common objective. The objectives of the organisation cannot be achieved by a single individual or a group. Success is possible with different groups of employees working together. All the employees do not have the same attitude towards their goals, work, and organisation. Employee Conflict is usually caused by a myriad of reasons arising from having employees with differing opinions, objectives, cultures, interests, and structural limitations. The employer needs to follow many strategies to resolve conflict among the employees. The present paper attempts to study the various models of Conflict management that are used by organisations to resolve conflicts that arise within them.

Keywords: Conflict, employees, resolution, organization, employer

I. INTRODUCTION

Conflict management is a process of identifying and addressing conflicts in an organization and to find the strategies to minimize negative consequences and maximize positive outcomes. It involves understanding the underlying causes of conflicts, utilizing effective communication and negotiation techniques, and promoting collaboration and compromise to find mutually satisfactory resolutions. The present study focuses on reasons for conflicts with in the individual and among the individuals and also techniques to resolve conflicts in the organization by following different conflict resolution models by Kenneth W. Thomas and Ralph H. Kilmann; Christopher Moore's Circle of Conflict Model.

II. NEED FOR THE STUDY

Conflict is one of many human – human interactions that can happen in an organizational context and it can cause cost escalations, reduced productivity and many other undesirable outcomes if not resolved amicably. By studying the various conflict resolution models, we can understand ways to implement proven techniques in conflict resolution and ensuring smooth operations.

III. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To understand the process of conflict management.
2. To identify the causes and possible outcomes of conflict.
3. To understand the various conflict resolution models.

IV. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The scope of the study is limited to the conceptual understanding of the conflict resolution models of Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (TKI) by Kenneth W. Thomas and Ralph H. Kilmann and Christopher Moore's Circle of Conflict.

V. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study is conceptual in nature and is derived from the various secondary sources that have postulated regarding the conflict management and resolution. By analysing those studies, we attempt to understand the conflict resolution models.

VI. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Conflict management involves the implementation of various behavioural methodologies to resolve conflicts. These undesirable behaviours arise from both the personal and non-personal circumstances of an individual and the choices they make during their interactions with people and problems. The choices are made based on the relative significance of one's own concerns and those of others. The manner in which the conflict is managed can cause more tension and uncertainty during and even after the resolution if not done with proper care.

Efficiency at solving conflicts improves for a conflict manager when they tackle each party individually; as any attempts to solve the same together (with both of the conflicting parties) can get complicated due to tensions that were either caused or born out of the conflict. It is advisable for a conflict manager to solve the conflict on an individual party basis rather than a group resolution, unless they believe otherwise.

4.1 Causes of Conflict: Conflict can occur due to a number of reasons that are both within and beyond the control of manager or the organization, we will consider some of the most prominent and prevalent causes of conflicts in an organization here,

- 1) **Organization Structure:** This is one of the causes that can be controlled by the firm. Under certain organizational structures – such as Matrix Structure, a manager might have to report to two bosses which could easily cause conflict if the bosses have differing views, opinions and goals.
- 2) **Limited Resources:** Best resources are always expensive and limited and then such resources may become a source of conflict, when employees from different departments can argue they too need those resources to further improve their performance.
- 3) **Task Interdependence:** It is often necessary for an employees' or a teams' to receive inputs to work on from the other teams i.e., interdependency between the teams and this can cause conflict as it requires all the parties to perform their actions error free.
- 4) **Personality differences:** No two individuals are alike and that remains true to employees of an organization and some personalities can be fundamentally incompatible.
- 5) **Communication Problems:** Communication is the life blood of the organization and any miscommunication or misunderstanding could lead to conflict that could have been avoided with having proper communication channels.

4.2 The process of Conflict management:

Based on the earlier definition, Conflict management includes identifying and resolving conflicts in a constructive manner, such that there are no nett negative consequences to the workflows of the organization and the resolution must address the cause of conflict rather than just the symptoms; and it involves,

- 1) **Define the source of the conflict:** The conflict manager must prioritise gathering all the relevant information regarding the conflict and gain a perspective and make a better decision rather than glossing over the impressions from the conflicting parties.
- 2) **Identify the source beyond the triggering event:** Often the cause of the conflict is usually not the triggering of the current one but an incident happened a while ago that started the tensions, the conflict manager must identify such events if possible.
- 3) **Obtain likely solutions from the parties:** Each of the parties may have their own version of solutions to resolve the conflict, obtain multiple solutions from the each of the parties.
- 4) **Create a resolution to the conflict through the models:** By implementing the conflict resolution models, the conflict manager can create a common ground that they derive from the earlier collected solutions.
- 5) **Obtain agreement from the parties:** After mediating and convincing the conflicting parties, obtain a mutually agreed upon resolution that prevents conflicts from flaring up in the future.
- 6) **Monitor and control the situation in a timely manner:** Just because the parties have agreed to resolve their issues, it is better if the manager monitors the behaviour of the parties and control their behaviour if need be.

4.3 The possible outcomes of conflict management

For a conflict manager, the outcome of a conflict resolution is key as it determines whether the conflict is completely resolved or temporarily postponed or worse; cause more issues. So, it is important to decipher the desirable and the undesirable,

The desirable or positive outcomes,

- Diverse set of ideas that can drive better decision making.
- Identification of inaccurate assumptions.
- Greater participation and creative work flows.
- Learn and grow from the conflict.

The undesirable or negative outcomes,

- Increased stress and anxious work environment.
- Uncertainty in individuals' capabilities and resulting increased turnover.
- Negative connotation such as lack of trust and inhibition to teamwork.
- Overall reduction in productivity and morale

4.4 Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (TKI) – developed by Kenneth W. Thomas and Ralph H. Kilmann in 1974, this model employs two “dimensions” that measure the assertiveness and cooperativeness of an individual in resolving the conflict, based on those dimensions, there are five possible resolutions,

- **Competition:**

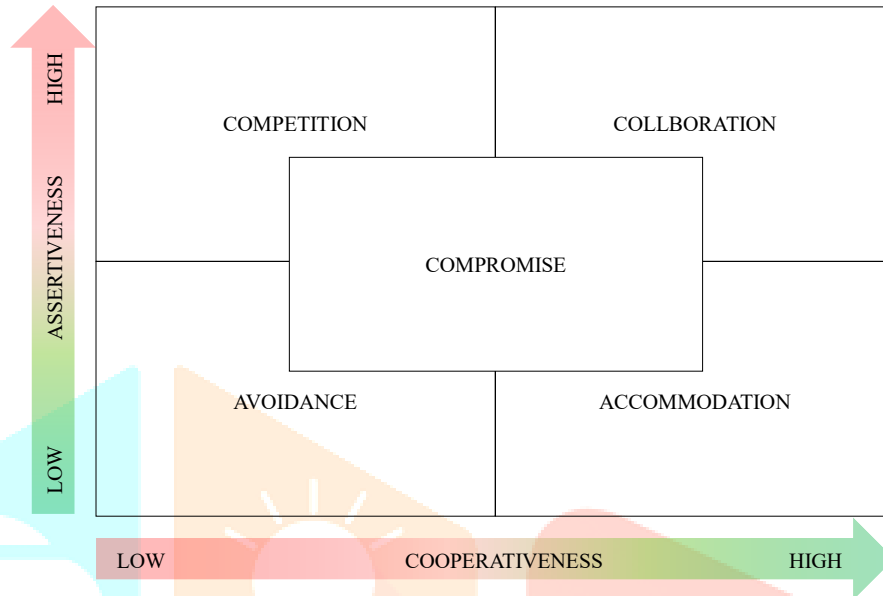
The conflict manager will find this useful when either or both of the parties could be highly assertive and also non-cooperative. In such cases the manager cannot amicably resolve the conflict as the result will be “win-lose” rather than “win-win” i.e., one of the parties must accept resolution pressured by the more assertive one.

- **Collaboration**

Here the parties are both assertive and cooperative, which lets them in resolving their conflicts in a constructive manner resulting in “win-win” situation where neither of the parties truly give up on their opinions or faiths in which innovative ideas are developed and trust is built.

- **Compromise**

Compromising involves both of the parties finding “common ground” in resolving the conflict. This is a desirable outcome as reason persists despite the conflict and the parties will give up or forego some of the conflict causing issues to get an amicable solution. Conflict manager can also involve



- **Avoidance**

In this kind of resolution, one of the parties accepts that the other party cannot be reasoned with and withdraws themselves to prevent further conflict. This individual may be more independent than others and does not long for support from others.

- **Accommodation**

One of the conflicting parties will completely neglect their own concerns to prevent escalation of conflict as they desire recognition and support from others including the other conflicting party. They usually use humour and apology to address the problem.

Advantages of TKI model:

- The TKI model provides a set of choices to pick from, enabling better and flexible resolutions that suit any specific conflict scenario.
- By implementing different conflict handling styles, the employees become confident in communicating their interests and opinions without fear of causing conflicts
- Through collaborative style, the conflicting parties will emphasise problem-solving and cooperation through which they can develop creative solutions to their problems.
- Avoiding and accommodation styles preserve relationships and reduce negative consequences of more assertive resolution models

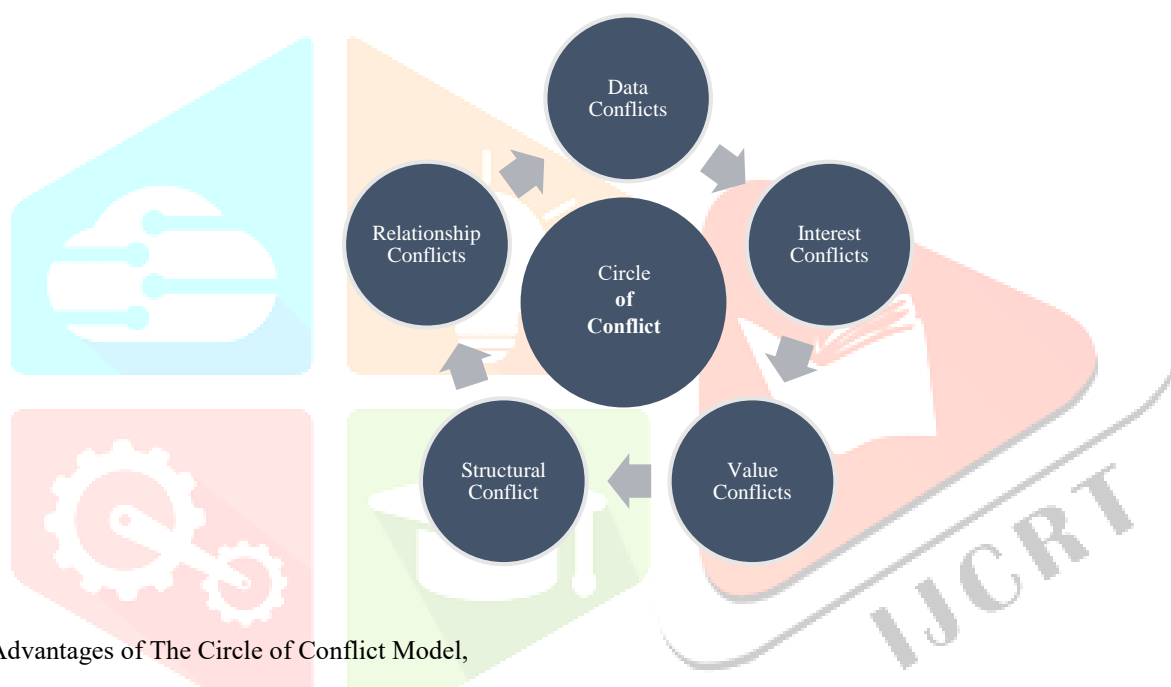
Disadvantages of the TKI model:

- More often than not, conflicts are complex and dynamic and in such situations a simple model such as TKI cannot be applied effectively.
- Compromising style of resolution is most common type of resolution as both parties agree on a common middle ground, which may not be better solution in the end.
- Since it is developed with western culture of 1970's in mind, emerging international and cross-cultural work environment pose a new challenge.
- Personal biases and emotional factors can affect the choice of resolution style there by diminishing the effectiveness of the resolution.

4.5 Circle of Conflict Model is a visual model illustrating the primary causes of conflict and was developed by Christopher Moore, a noted negotiator and mediator. This model involves identifying and agreeing upon the source of conflict. Through this acceptance, the conflict manager can easily prepare strategies to resolve the conflict.

Moore identified five primary sources of conflict and they are as follows,

- **Relationship Conflicts** – Here, the source of conflict is interpersonal differences, emotions, mistrust, misunderstanding and other miscommunications. Using third party and neutral mediators can help in resolving this kind of conflict.
- **Data Conflicts** – misinformation, lack of information, misinterpretation of data and other data comprehension related issues. Since information is “the life blood of the organization”, free flow of information and consensus on data interpretation can prevent the flare ups..
- **Interest Conflicts** – In many cases, the reason behind stubbornness of an individual in a conflict can be attributed to their psychological interests and to resolve such issues, conflict manager must identify and address those interests to get positive outcomes.
- **Value Conflicts** – Values are the way an individual views the world and criteria upon which they evaluate ideas both within and from others. Conflict through such values is caused by either differing world views or violation of an individual’s values. This can be resolved by finding and honouring those values.
- **Structural Conflict** – these conflicts arise due to power disparities, positions, voices, resource access, or time constraints and are commonly overlooked as it is necessary for organizations to have a limited span of control to reduce inefficiencies. Resolving such issues necessitates deliberate conversation - courageous facilitation, sharing experiences, and open-mindedness.



Advantages of The Circle of Conflict Model,

1. The Circle of Conflict Model offers a comprehensive analysis of conflicts, considering various dimensions such as relationships, data, interests, and structural issues to better resolve conflicts.
2. It emphasizes the importance of effective communication, promoting open dialogue, active listening, and understanding different perspectives.
3. The model provides insights for conflict prevention and management, helping individuals and organizations take proactive measures and minimize the negative impact of conflicts.

Disadvantages of The Circle of Conflict Model,

1. The Model lacks robust empirical validation as it primarily operates as a conceptual framework. Its ability to predict and effectively resolve conflicts may vary depending on individual experiences and contextual factors.
2. It does not offer detailed step-by-step guidance on resolving specific conflicts, requiring additional frameworks and strategies for practical application.
3. Interpreting conflicts using the Circle of Conflict Model relies on subjective judgment, which can lead to varying assessments and solutions depending on different perspectives.

VII. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Dr. G.Balamurugan and M.Sreeleka (2020), Conflict resolution techniques are employed in organisations to address issues with interpersonal skills. Conflict these days originates from a lack of communication among all parties. Conflict inside the organisation is frequently caused by poor communication. Conflict occurs when there is a difference of opinion between two or more parties. The process of peacefully and completely resolving a quarrel is known as conflict resolution. In this essay, we'll use a descriptive approach to examine how women workers in the IT industry handle conflicts.

Sally Erin Howell (2014), Conflict management is crucial for organizational functioning and individual development. This literature review examines five conflict management styles: competing, accommodating, avoiding, compromising, and cooperating. Technologists prefer cooperating conflict management when feelings have not escalated, and compromising conflict management after heated conflicts. The study found that education level did not affect their preferred conflict management styles. Overall, effective conflict management is essential for organizational success and personal growth.

Resmi R Chandran (2019), Conflict analysis, conflict density, conflict definition, conflict assessment, conflict intensity, and conflict monitoring are all essential steps in the management of conflicts. In social interactions, conflict is common and is correlated with resource scarcity, division of labour, imbalance of power, and role differentiation. Administrators can intervene in dispute development by using a variety of conflict management techniques that are integrated into organisations' structures. These systems' propensity for managing aggressive conflict behaviour and facilitating a workable resolution serve as measures of their efficacy. This study investigates the efficiency of conflict resolution procedures in IT and pharmaceutical firms.

Nannan Wang and Guobin Wu (2020), Program conflict management is more challenging due to complex structures and stakeholder relationships, impacting program performance and success. This research examines unique program conflicts, their causes, impacts, and resolution strategies using a social network method. A program conflict management model is developed, focusing on conflict identification, resolution, feedback, and prevention, differing from project conflict management patterns. The findings offer insights for practitioners and researchers to better understand and mitigate program conflicts.

Oachesu Madalina(2016), The art of communication is the language of leadership" - James Humes. In a world of interdependencies, relationships play a central role in life. Social interactions often lead to conflicts, especially in the workplace. This paper focuses on the role of communication in managing conflicts, as it is a common element in conflict resolution. Conflicts are inherent in society due to resource scarcity, division of tasks, power dynamics, and organizational roles. All types of organizations, whether public, private, or non-profit, face daily conflicts from internal and external causes. As organizations are living systems with defined roles and interdependence, conflict becomes inevitable in certain contexts.

M. Afzalur Rahim (2002), Managing organizational conflict involves diagnosing and intervening in affective and substantive conflicts at interpersonal, intragroup, and intergroup levels, while employing effective conflict resolution strategies. A proper diagnosis determines the need and type of intervention required. Generally, interventions aim to maintain a moderate level of substantive conflict in nonroutine tasks, minimize affective conflict across all levels, and enable members to choose suitable conflict management styles for effective problem-solving. By diagnosing conflicts and implementing process and structural interventions, organizations can improve learning and effectiveness.

Hassan Elkataweh(2011), This case study is of an organisational conflict at Moon Tyre Company is covered in the essay. The disagreement between the business owners on how to make money and save the company is the cause of the conflict and it led to productivity being hampered by this conflict. The Circle of Conflict model, which has elements in common with other conflict analysis models, is used to analyse the cause of conflict. This strategy seeks to improve comprehension and accuracy in the analysis of the dispute and the identification of potential solutions. The paper also describe the intervention strategy, which includes collaborating with the parties concerned and foreseeing difficulties.

VIII. FINDINGS

1. Variables such as employee interests, goals and culture will affect the conflict causation and resolution.
2. The conflict development is found to be closely associated with the organizational structure.
3. In managing conflicts, various stakeholders can influence the outcome.
4. Understanding the various conflict management styles will ensure flexibility in resolving the conflicts and the strengths and weaknesses of each of the styles.
5. Collaborative environment will ensure effective performance without conflicts.
6. Conflict management requires a combination of investigative and human skills.

IX. SUGGESTIONS

1. The Conflict among the employees must be addressed based on employee job variables.
2. Organizational structure must be configured to address and resolve conflicts quickly.
3. Stakeholders must align their efforts to find the best possible outcome.
4. By employing a mixture of conflict resolution styles, managers can resolve different types of conflicts.
5. Team spirit and improved organizational awareness can create a collaborative environment.
6. Thorough investigation of the conflict by using human skills can help in better managing of the conflict.

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