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31: ORGANIZATIONAL CONFLICTS: NATURE, TYPES, CAUSES AND MECHANISM FOR RESOLUTION

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INTRODUCTION

There is no gainsaying the fact that we live in an "organizational society", which affects our lives from when we are born, to the schools we attend, and to places from where we earn our living, or spend our leisure times till death. No man can be an island unto himself. To be able to make a living, man must inevitably interact with his fellow men in one form of organization or another. The Oxford Advanced Learners' Dictionary defines Organization as "an organized group of people". Crowther (1995) similarly states that an "organization is a social unit (human groupings) constructed and reconstructed to seek specific goals." In the same vein, Gullet (1981) sees an organization as a structured process in which persons interact to achieve objectives. Similarly, organization is "something that is structured so that human activities can be coordinated to accomplish set objectives". From these various concepts of organization, one can deduce that organizations are made up of human beings who have goals to achieve and as a result are in constant interaction with each other or with one another.

Thus, in human in interactions, if one is not cooperating or in collaboration, he could be competing and where he is not engaged in either of the two, he will be engaged in conflicts. Our interest in this .chapter is on organizational conflicts and the objective is to examine the types of conflict in organizations, be they private or public, and to highlight the various sources of conflict in these organizations and the mechanisms for resolving them. Apart from this introductory aspect, this chapter is divided into the following parts: Part I is on the various concepts of organizational conflict. Part II is on

the types and sources of conflicts in organization. Part III is on the mechanisms for resolving organizational conflict, and Part IV is the conclusion.

The Conceptual Framework

As in most concepts in the social and management sciences, there is no universally accepted definition of conflict. Rather, what exists is a plethora of definitions or conceptions. The consensus among scholars is that conflict is an inevitable part or process of social life. It is a continuing reality of social existence. Necessarily, conflict involves two or more parties that have or perceive incompatibility in their interests and values, or is a strategy of achieving the ends desired (Akpuru-Aja 2009). In simple terms, conflict can be said to refer to a situation in which one identifiable human being or a group of human beings is engaged in a conscious opposition to another identifiable human being or group of human beings because they are pursuing what are or appear to be incompatible goals.

As Coser (1965) puts it, conflict is a struggle over values and claims to scarce status, power and resources in which the aims of the opponents are to neutralize, injure or eliminate their rivals. To Cornhuskers et al (1954), conflict is the total range of behaviours and attitudes that expresses oppositions and divergent orientation of owners and managers on the one hand and working people and their organizations on the other hand. According to Boulding (1963), conflict is a situation of competition in which the parties involved are aware of the incompatibility of their potential future positions and in which each party wishes to occupy a position that is incompatible with the wishes of the other. Conflict is an advanced form of discontent or intense disagreement over values in which parties in contention maintain a position unacceptable to rivals, leading to degeneration and hence open hostility. To Robbins (1974), conflict is the process (not even the act) where a party deliberately makes an effort to block the efforts of another person with the aim of frustrating the latter in his

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attempt to attain his goals, or prosecute his interest. Similarly, Bloisi (2007) sees conflict as a disagreement between two or more parties who perceive that they have incompatible concerns. To Bloisi, individuals, groups, departments, organizations, countries, etc, do experience conflicts whenever an action by one party is perceived as preventing or interfering with the goals, needs or actions of another.

In the view of Imobigbe (1997), conflict is a condition of disharmony or hostility within an interaction process which is usually the direct result of a clash of interests by the parties involved. Viewing conflict from an organizational perspective, Stoner et al (1996) see it as a disagreement between two or more organization members or groups, arising from the fact that they must share scarce resources or work activities, and or from the fact that they have different goals, values or perceptions. In the same vein, Litterrer, quoted by Jones et al (2008), sees organizational conflict as the discord that arises when the goals, interests, or values of different individuals or groups are incompatible and those individuals or groups block or thwart one another's attempts to achieve their objectives.

A significant point to note in organizational conflicts is that it can exist between departments and divisions that compete for resources or even between managers who may be competing for promotion to the next level in the organizational hierarchy (Jones et al, 2008). However, whichever way it manifests in organizations, it has significant implications for organizational performance.

Nature of Conflict

Conflict may be violent or non-violent (that is, in terms of physical force), dominant or recessive, controllable, resolvable or insoluble under various sets of circumstances. Conflicts entail, at a minimum, the existence of two or more parties who perceive differences between or among themselves and who are committed to resolving those differences to their own satisfaction. Conflict may be seen as an intrinsic product of

communication and contact between people. Thus, when people (individual or groups) do not interact with one another, there may not be overt conflict; conversely, when people (individuals or group) interact with one another, some conflict may become inevitable. However, nowhere can conflict be undesirable, too frequent or an anomaly.

As Kegley and Wiltkopf (1981) put it, "conflict" performs many positive functions (such as enhancing social solidarity, classifying values, simulating growth and promoting learning), which if well managed, are constructive to human progress. In the same vein, Coser (1956) observes that close contacts lead to both friendship and enmity, or cooperation may produce conflict, and the conflict, paradoxically, may promote cooperation. Burton (1987), Fraser and Hipel (1984), Moore (1987) and Ola and Oyibo (2000), among others, also support the view that constructive conflict is an elixir to progress, maintaining that conflict represents the dynamic aspect of human relations which has its creative elements that enable such values as welfare, security and justice, among others, to be achieved. To attempt to stop it could amount to bringing development and growth to a standstill.

Just as many writers and scholars see conflict as inevitable for organizational growth and development, others view it differently. To them, it is destructive. Imobighe (1997), for example, argues that "conflict is a destructive and abnormal social phenomenon which should be avoided as much as possible because of the horror and wastage which trail it in organizations". Taking a middle-road approach, Koontz et al (2007) see conflict as having beneficial and dysfunctional consequences. According to them, while conflict is generally perceived as being dysfunctional, it can also be beneficial because it may present an issue in different perspectives. To Zartman, quoted by Olowu (2008), conflict is an inevitable aspect of human interactions, an unavoidable concomitant of choices and decision. As he puts it, the problem then is not to court the frustration of seeking to remove inevitability but rather to try to keep conflicts in bounds, in time, expenses, efficacy and humanness.

Marxists are not left out of taking a position on the functionality of organizational conflict. To them, "The class struggle is an important factor in the development of the productive forces. Were it not for the struggle of the workers, the capitalists would be less concerned with the development of technology" (Afanasyev, 1980).

Given these various views about the functionality or dysfunctionality of conflict, one thing is clear, and this is that no matter the arguments, all organizations experience conflicts one way or another and there is nothing wrong with it. As Koontz et al (2007) put it, "conflict is a part of organizational life" and it is inevitable. Nevertheless, what is important is that when it occurs it should be controlled or managed so as not to allow it to escalate. The fact remains that, it is not the occurrence of conflict that matters, but the dangers of its escalation. Having said this, let us look at some functional and dysfunctional consequences of conflict in organizations.

Theoretical Framework

Karl Marx is without doubt the celebrated father of modern social conflict thinking in the social sciences. Marx was not just an avid thinker but a revolutionary who believed in the power of the masses to reorder the social conditions of their existence. In spite of the now practical unpopularity of most of the Marxian notions, he was a profound and articulate thinker whose penetrating insights on the nature of human society still remain breath-taking (Anugwu, 2009). To Marxists, conflict is endemic not only in organizations but also in the society as a whole. To them conflict is simply a struggle, an opposition or a fight, which they attribute to the capitalistic exploitation of poor labour sellers. This is the relationship existing between the oppressors (owners of the means of production, labour buyers or bourgeois) and those who do not own the means of production but have their labour to sell (the oppressed or the proletariats) (Afanasyev, 1980).

According to Marxists, the "history of antagonistic societies is the history of class struggle, with the oppressor (bourgeois) and the oppressed (proletariats) standing in

constant opposition to one another". The conflict situation is viewed as a product of the labour market, in which on the one hand there are workers who have to sell labour power in order to subsist, while on the other hand there are buyers of labour power who own the means of production and purchase labour power (Jackson, 1987).

According to them, these two interests are irreconcilable. Thus "for countless centuries the working people, whether slaves, peasants or industrial workers have been brutally exploited by the ruling class (owners of the means of production) and it is natural that they should struggle against oppression and strive for a free and happy life" (Afanasyev, 1980). Karl Marx, Engels, Lenin, and other Marxists share this view. The central problem from their point of view lies on the economies rather than the social sphere. In essence, the problem lies on the division of economic resources and the existence of the capitalist class. It is the consensus of the Marxists therefore that "One fine day, all workers in a country or even may be throughout the world will stop work and force the wealthy classes ... to give in..." (Jackson, 1987).

In spite of the above, the influential sociologist, Emile Durkheim provides the most profound critique of Karl Marx's conflict notion. According to him, a conflict exists between Marx the revolutionary and Marx the Social Scientist (Okeibunor and Anugwon, 2003; Anugwon, 2009). Thus, for Durkheim, Karl Marx allowed the emotional burden of the revolutionary struggle to impinge on his academic ideas. Therefore, the passion for revolution became the Achilles heel of the otherwise erudite and rational scholarship of Karl Marx (Anugwon, 2009).

Some schools of thought see this as "natural," hinging their views on the wise saying that "the tongue and teeth quarrel". As far as they are concerned, there is therefore nothing wrong with conflict. They even posit that there is need to occasionally stimulate it so as to have innovations and improvements in organizations or society as a whole. Appleby (1982) is one scholar who takes this view. According to him:

Current thoughts on conflicts are that it is inevitable and sometimes necessary. The implications are that it is harmful (or dysfunctional) to individuals and the attainment of organizational goals; but it is recognized that by clarifying issues, it can lead to a search for solutions and can help innovation and change in organizations. Conflict therefore must be managed and at times stimulated to bring problems to light and ensure that a better and more effective solution is obtained.

Thus, it is seen here that conflict is a "necessary evil", which finds expression in human interaction. What Appleby and his likes are put forward is that, it will be utopian to see a conflictless society or organization contrary to the make-shift belief of the Marxists that a classless society or organization will end conflicts all over the world. The point however remains that conflict cannot cease because it is innate in man. Thomas Hobbes captures this view eloquently, when, in his major work Leviathan, he describes the hopeless chaos of the state of nature as a life without gentility or beauty, without charm or peace and without industry or culture (Baradat, 1999).

According to him, "in the hideous state, there was only human conflict, a constant war of all against all. For him, "man rather originally existed in a condition of natural warfare — a state of *homo homini lupus*, a condition in which man is wolf to man" (Nwokolo, 1988). By war, Hobbes must have meant not only actual battle but more of the disposition or inclination towards it, which made him to conclude that "the life of man is solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short" (Baradat, 1999). That man is in perpetual conflict with himself, his organization and his overall environment is therefore not surprising. Conflict must occur in organizations and what should be of prime concern is its management (control) so as to avoid its escalation and the final resolution or settlement as the case may be. Over the years, men have had cause to conflict with themselves or with others. This paper, therefore, probes into the causes of organizational conflict and highlights mechanisms for their control.

Types and Sources of Conflict in Organizations

Sources of conflict vary from organization to organization and could be internal or external. For the purpose of this paper, we shall discuss the prominent types and their most common causes.

(1)   Intra-Personal Conflict: This type of conflict occurs within the individual himself in an organization. It is the internal battles which the individual contends with, born out of frustration or some omission or commission in his life. It usually takes the latent form since it is embedded in the individual.

(2)   Inter-Personal Conflict: This type of conflict usually occurs between two or among more individuals in the organization. It cuts across all levels of workers, junior or senior. One major cause of it is ideological value or goal differences. In organizations, it is not unusual to find two people always disagreeing just because of their different values, ideas or goals. What 'A' prefers may not suit 'B' and thus opposition occurs as 'one man's meat becomes another's poison. Some persons are simply not just compatible and no matter their pretence, they soon fall out. An organization that is infested with people of this nature hardly makes progress.

Pride, ego-boosting, criticisms (whether destructive or constructive — as some people do not appreciate constructive criticisms not to talk of when they are destructive) are also sources of inter-personal conflicts. Unclarified roles (role conflict) or not clearly defined job descriptions are also a source of this type of conflict in organizations. The result is that there is usually an overlap in the roles some people play in organizations, which create problems for them and the organization. Greed, suspicion, unfairness,

unfulfilled promises, accusations, injustice, failure to honour or keep to agreements are all sources of this type of conflict.

Power struggle also is another source of inter-personal conflict between individuals or groups in organizations (Okojie, 2000). For example, a struggle to become general manager or chairman, etc. of an organization between individuals or members of a group in an organization. Sources of interpersonal conflict really know no bounds. It could even be a mere mistake or a slip. However, whatever the source or cause is, it disrupts team work in organizations and of course affects the productive capacity of the organization.

(3)   Inter-Subordinate Conflict: This type of conflict occurs between or among the subordinates in organizations known or unknown to the superordinates. It is different from inter-personal conflict in the sense that it is limited to the subordinates in the course of their duties in the organization. The point is that there are situations when the subordinates quarrel between or among themselves just as the superordinates also do. The sources of this type of conflict are similar to those of inter-personal conflicts. Chief among them is greed, especially in sharing of whatever may come their way.

(4)   Inter-Superordinate Conflict: As in the case of intersubordinate conflicts, this type of conflict occurs between or among the superordinates (senior staff or even directors) in the organization. It may also be known or unknown to the subordinates in the organization. The sources are also as in the case of inter-personal conflict but chief among them are power struggle, ideological or value differences, envy, petty jealousy, pride or egoism.

(5)   Management-Workers Conflict: This is about the most prevalent and conspicuous type of conflict in organizations and it occurs in industries and

institutions, whether private or public. Okojie (2000) lists the following as examples of the sources of this type of conflict:

- Lack of concern for employees' (workers') welfare.

- Inefficient wages and salary administration.

- Poor human relations.

- Greed in the management of organizational resources.

- Lateness to work or absenteeism.

- Poor industrial relations.

- Poor or absence of communication between superordinates and subordinates.

- Leadership style, etc.

From Okojie's point of view, it is clear that management-workers conflicts are not usually one-sided. Thus, management can have reason(s) to conflict with workers just as workers can do the same. For example, some workers are just so lazy that even when they have no complaints whatsoever, they exhibit poor attitudes to work and this is more prevalent in public organizations where workers see government work as free for all. In this regard Yoruba proverb says, "Oga ta, Oga o ta, owo alaru ape," literally meaning no matter the turnover, the workers must have their full pay. The ongoing privatization and commercialization exercise of the Federal Government of Nigeria is a pointer to this notion. The government no doubt must have embarked on the policy to denounce such notions and also avoid conflicts with some of the workers. Appleby (1982) also states the following as sources of management-workers conflict:

- Money (the ratio of profit to wages).

- Job (the ratings attached to one's job leading to safeguarding it and embarking on conflict if given to others).

- Goals (incompatible goals).

- Environmental factors (leading to fear of insecurity on the part of the workers thus leading them to embark on conflict) .

- Authority and power (when misused).

- Nature of work itself (when they are boring).

- Selfishness on the part of management (not recognizing that there should be equal power representation of management and workers).

To Koontz et al (2007), sources of organizational conflicts include:

- Complex relationships as a result of high degree of inter-dependence.

- Incompatible goals especially when the parties are competing for limited

- Value differentials and different perceptions of an issue.

- Struggle for positions such as in the line or staff positions

- Management style (leadership style).

- Educational background.

- Lack of communication.

In the views of Damachi (1986), sources of conflicts in industries include:

- Lack of mutual interests between management and workers.

- Unlimited desires of management and workers.

- Dynamic nature of the society culminating in various fluctuations or changes in prices, pattern of consumption, reduced value of the monetary unit as well as increased income for a comparable group elsewhere. All these are capable of bringing perpetual conflict, as the parties would need to look for a new allocation of income and power.

- Need to retain institutional identities which culminate in the inevitability of conflict.

Writing under sources of industrial conflict, Otobo (1987) also identifies the following:

- Style and management.

- Nature of physical environment of the workplace.

- Consciousness of workers.

- Conditions of service.

- Efficacy or otherwise of the promotion system.

- Cumbersomeness of grievance and disputes procedures.

- Industrial and economic policies of government.

- Nature of national economic mismanagement.

- General distribution of wealth and power in society.

According to him, some of the sources might not directly instigate industrial conflict but do influence general expectations, substantially determine nature of workers demands, have a bearing on intensity of conflict, and set the whole tenor for the conduct of industrial relations. Explaining the sources of conflict further, Otobo (1987) observes.

Two points here need emphasis. Firstly, it is because the worker lacks any direct control over the future of his job that his desire to establish a right to the job is always a potential source of conflict. Secondly, the actual exercise of management control can generate resistance even from workers who do not ordinarily question its legitimacy, thus the exercise of management power is a perpetual source of conflict.

In the same vein, Olowu (2008) identifies the following as the principal causes of conflict in organizations:

(i)   Misunderstanding.

(ii)   Personality clashes.

(iii)   Lack of cooperation.

(iv)   Frustration and irritability.

(v)   Differences over work method.

(vi)   Responsibility issues.

(vii)   Authority issues.

(viii) Values and goals differences.

(ix)   Non-compliance with rules and policies.

(x)   Competition for limited resources.

(xi)   Substandard performance.

As he puts it, employers and workers face conflict on a regular basis. However, what is important is that when they occur, they be recognized and dealt with instead of being ignored.

Likewise, Jones et al (2008) while positing that conflict in organizations springs from a variety of sources, lists the following as typical: (i) different goals and time horizons (ii) overlapping authority (iii) task interdependencies (iv) different evaluation or reward systems (v) scarce resources and (vi) status inconsistencies.

Management-workers conflicts are no doubt typical types of conflict that plague organizational progress. As has been highlighted, it is clear that it can be borne out of many sources, chief among which are:

(i)   Leadership/Management style.

(ii)   Communication gap.

(iii)   Conditions of service/employers welfare.

(iv)   Wages/salary structure or expectations.

(v)   Poor attitude to work.

(vi)   Mismanagement of organization resources.

(vii)   Nature of physical environment.

(viii)   Poor human and industrial relations.

(ix)   Lack of mutual interests between management and workers.

(x)   Unlimited desire of management and workers.

(xi)   Unstable economic policies culminating in inflation and increased income for a comparable group.

(xii)   Greed in the management of organizational resources or exploitative tendencies on the management's part.

(xiii)   Nature of work itself.

(xi-v) Misuse of authority and power by the management.

(6)   Management-Union Conflict: This type of conflict occurs between management and the workers' representatives. The union represents the workers and caters for their welfare in organizations. Statutorily, they are expected to be elected. They stand in for the workers in matters that affect them. Some sources of such conflict include failure to meet union's demands on behalf of the members, failure to honour agreements reached and victimization of union members.

(7)   Union-Workers Conflicts: This type of conflict occurs between the union and the workers they represent. Some sources of this conflict include discontent or dissatisfaction with union activities or what could be

considered poor representation and overzealousness on the part of union officials.

(8)   Intra-Union (Officials) Conflicts: This type of conflict occurs within the union itself. Some of the sources include a leadership style that may not go down well with some members, inefficient revenue sharing, and lack of probity, accountability and transparency.

(9)   Intra-Management Conflicts: This type of conflict occurs within the management staff or directors alone. Some of the sources include value differentials, different perceptions of an issue, inefficient revenue sharing, exploitative tendencies, Leadership style, lack of probity or accountability or transparency, etc.

(10)   Superordinate-Subordinates Conflict: This type of conflict occurs between senior and junior officers in the organization. Some of the sources include: disrespect, disregard, underrating, undermining or inconsequential treatment of the junior officers by the senior ones.

(11)   Organization-Environment Conflicts: Apart from the humans within the organization, conflicts can also occur between an organization and its environment. For instance, there could be conflict between organizations and government on certain policies of the latter which may not go down well with the former. Examples are policies on excise duties, taxation, wages and salaries, etc. Similarly, an organization can be in conflict with the community in which it is situated (for example, some oil companies situated in Nigeria oil communities whose conflicts have known no bounds), competitors, suppliers, customers, shareholders etc. These are all elements that affect organizations even though they are external to it, and when they occur they usually have grave dysfunctional consequences on the organization. However, as we have mentioned severally in this chapter, some of the conflicts can also have functional consequences.

(12)   Government-Union Workers Conflict: This is yet a type of conflict that is gathering momentum in recent times and it occurs mainly in public organizations, where government is the sole sponsor. Even though, these public organizations have management, they are usually side-tracked by the Workers and their union to face the government. The academic staff union of universities is a typical case here. Apart from very few cases, their grievances are usually directed at the government for solutions rather than the school (university) authorities. The Nigerian Medical Association also falls into this category. However, some sources of this type of conflict include the demand for better remuneration, failure to honour agreements, unpleasant government policies, programmes or actions on the masses, poor funding (as in the case of Nigerian universities), among others.

Stages of Conflict

Conflict takes two major stages:

(1)   Latent stages of conflict.

(2)   Manifest stages of conflict.

Latent Stage: This stage of conflict is the initial stage when the aggrieved party begins to perceive what is considered unpalatable but remains quiet about it.

Manifest Stage: This stage is when conflict becomes open resulting in confrontation, contentions, actions and reactions.

Mechanisms for Resolving Organizational Conflict

Having highlighted the different types and sources of organizational conflict, we shall now look at how they can be resolved. In general terms, the following mechanisms apply:

(1)   Self- Smoothing Mechanism.

(2)   Joint-Smoothing Mechanism.

(3)   Arbitration Mechanism.

(4)   Adjudication Mechanism.

(5)   Passive Mechanism.

(6)   Force or coercive Mechanism.

(1)   Self-Smoothing Mechanism: In this mechanism, the offending party simply withdraws or corrects the issue that gave rise to the conflict without any dialogue with the aggrieved party. This means the offending party would have realized that the action taken does not go down well with the people or person it is directed at, and simply withdraws or corrects it. The logic here is that if there is no cause, there will not be an effect. For example, in inter-personal conflicts, if a person has wrongly accused another to the extent that there is a clash, what the accuser needs do is to withdraw the accusation and possibly apologize. Similarly, if management has formulated a policy or taken a decision that is not palatable to the employees, the policy or decision is simply rescinded, with or without apology.

(2)   Joint or Collective Smoothing Mechanism: This mechanism entails the much talked about confrontation, collective bargaining, dialogue, negotiation, talk, and discussions. The parties involved get into mass meetings to iron out areas of disagreement themselves and come to a compromise. One condition for this mechanism is that each party must be willing to bend, that is, there must be in the parties, "the spirit of give and take". There must be nothing like greed, selfishness, self-centeredness or rigid positions. Those involved must be flexible.enough to allow for a compromise or agreement.

(3) Arbitration Mechanism: This entails intervention or mediation by neutral persons, parties or organizations that must have goodwill. For example, during the conflict between the Federal Government of Nigeria and the Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC) in late 2000 over oil pump prices, labour leader and statesman Alhaji Kola Balogun had to mediate. The conflict was resolved subsequently. However, it is pertinent to note that for arbitration to be possible, each party must be willing to settle by giving and taking. Indeed, "giving" and "taking" are the panacea to conflict resolution. Once this spirit is in the conflicting parties, resolution will be easy to come by. A mediator may come on his own, be invited, or be set up. In other situations, conflicts can be resolved by a person higher up in the organization who has sufficient goodwill to decide on the issue of conflict (Koontz et al, 2007). By so doing, he is also seen as a mediator or arbitrator.

(4) Adjudication Mechanism: This entails an industrial court or panel to adjudicate on the issue of conflict. In this case, either party to the conflict can go to court. For instance, as an interim measure, either party can seek a court injunction prohibiting the other from the action that brought about the conflict until the substantive case is determined. Statutorily, before organizational disputes or conflicts are taken to court, they must have been seen to be beyond amicable resolution by the parties involved or that a deadlock or impasse has occurred. For example, there is the National Industrial Court (NIC) in Nigeria, which has original jurisdiction on disputes that emanate from an essential service and those referred to it directly by the Minister of Labour, Productivity and Employment (Fashoyin, 1992).

(5) Passive or Passivistic Mechanism: This mechanism entails allowing the conflict to ease out on its own through time by reduced actions. That is, both

sides learn to live with their incompatible positions. The passive mechanism is more useful in inter-personal conflicts and inter-subordinate conflicts, etc.

(6)   Force or Coercive Mechanism: This implies taking certain unpalatable actions that will "force" or "coerce" the offending party to succumb to the demands of the aggrieved party. To force is to compel. Below are some weapons that conflicting parties in organizations can adopt to force the other to a compromise.

Weapons Open to Union and Workers to Force Management/Employers to Succumb

(i) Strike Actions: Usually no attempt is made to distinguish between strikes and lockouts since in many instances the matter is debatable and the concepts of strikes and stoppage of work are treated as synonymous (Clegg, 1979). In a strike, the workers say: We will not work for you or buy your goods under those terms; when you are ready to accept them the workers are available, with their labour and purchasing powers (Ukandi and Damachi, 1986).

Given the inequities that are usually associated with unilateral decision-making and the unwillingness of the public employer to use the bargaining machinery, the role of strikes as a means of ensuring employment conditions in the public sector then becomes critically important. In other words, without effective collective bargaining, the strike is the main avenue for giving expression to employees' grievances. And since only the strike can induce the public employer to negotiate, it is therefore an effective means of conducting industrial relations in the public sector (Fashoyin, 1992).

(ii)   Physical Assaults: This is an extreme situation and industrial or organizational conflicts hardly reach this stage. It involves physical attacks on the other party by the aggrieved party. In most cases, it results in organized destructions from which it may be hard to recover.

(iii)   Harassments and Intimidation: Harassment and intimidation aim at putting the employer in bad light by doing things that are embarrassing or antithetical to normal work behaviour. This form of action does not always project a negative image of the union to the public as the strike does, but it makes it possible for the workers to intimidate the employer while they achieve their objectives (Fashoyin, 1992) — for example, locking up the gates to the organization or the entrance of a conference hall when a meeting is going on.

(iv)   Ban on Overtime: This is another weapon that is open to unions and workers to force management and employers to succumb. It is used to cause considerable disruption and delay in production or services without turning the customers away. It is usually a strategy that seeks to impose additional costs on the employer if more production is required. It has been found to be an effective means of securing the employer's concession. Overtime ban can have a disruptive effect on efficiency (Fashoyin, 1992).

(v)   Picketing: Yet another weapon open to the union or workers to get the employers to succumb to their demand is picketing. Picketing is a situation whereby some workers, in most cases unions, physically prevent other workers from entering to perform their jobs. Picketing is permitted so long as it is really for the purpose of peacefully obtaining or communicating information, or of peacefully persuading any person to abstain from work. It is done in contemplation or furtherance of a trade dispute.

(vi)   Boycotts: This is 'another strategy that can be adopted by unions to press for their demands during disputes. In this case, the workers' representatives, as a means of protest, may refuse having interactions with the management of the organization.

(vii)   Absenteeism: Absenteeism is another weapon open to unions and workers to force management/employers to succumb. Workers may be persistently absent from work as a way of forcing the management to succumb to their demands.

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(viii) Work-to-Rule: This is a traditional form of industrial action. It is otherwise known as go-slow. It is a union strategy which seeks to render skeletal services or embark on deliberate low production. Fashoyin (1992) argues that work-to-rule aims at the restriction of output through deliberate reduction in the place of work. It became a popular union bargaining strategy following the non-strike provision of the Second World War (WWII) time legislation.

(ix) Demonstrations and Embarrassing Rallies: Demonstrations can also be used by the union against the employer. This is protest by rallies or parades, etc. It also aims at portraying the employer in bad light or to embarrass the management.

(x) Insubordination: This happens where the workers or their representatives are not submissive to authority or are, disobedient or rebellious. It is an acceptable strategy that can be adopted by the union to force management to succumb to their demands.

(xi) Sabotage of Property Tools and Instruments: Overt effort to destroy the other party is an extreme outcome of escalated conflicts, leading to pilfering of company's components or spare parts. This eventually will lead to stoppage of work or partial closure of the organization as a result of total breakdown of equipment.

(xii) Media Propaganda and Blackmail: Media propaganda and blackmail can also be used by the union to get its demands. This is organized dissemination of damaging information or, allegations with the intent to smear the reputation of an organization. Sometimes, the union may resort to threats to disclose information to get management to succumb.

(xiii) Lock-Out and Lock-In: This is a strategy quite frequently used in organizations and it indicates unhealthy labour relations. To force management or employers to succumb to their demands, the workers physically take over the company premises

either by locking in or locking out the management staff, thus preventing them from exiting the premises.

Weapons Open to Management/Employers

(i) Embargo on Salary/Wages and Overtime: The employer may adopt this strategy to compel the workers or its representatives to put an end to a strike action. The management or the employer of labour may order that the salaries, wages and other allowances of the workers be stopped pending the time the union will order the workers back to work. For example, the Federal Government of Nigeria ordered the three months' salaries of university lecturers to be stopped "following the refusal of ASUU to call off a strike that started on 29 December 2002. Although the order was later rescinded, it served as a check on the excesses of the union and its members.

(ii) Denial or Withdrawal of Essential Benefits: Other essential benefits due to employees may also be denied or withdrawn from them — for example, official cars, feeding allowances, leave allowances etc.

(iii) Persuasion: In this case, the management may induce, urge or prevail upon the union to return to work successfully. Even if the demands have not been met, management may promise to meet them within a stipulated time.

(iv) Lay-Offs: Another strategy open to management to get workers to call off their industrial action is laying them off. The management or employer may terminate workers' employment with the intention of employing others. This makes workers to be jittery and to want to give up the struggle.

(v) Court Injunction: Management can also obtain a court injunction to restrain the union or workers from embarking on an industrial action.

(vi)   Employers' Association: The primary responsibility of the employers' association is the bargaining function. They have the task of negotiating with workers' unions, a function that is carried out under the auspices of the Committee of Personnel Experts (COPE).

(vii)   Resolution or Compromise: In this case the management or employer is partially assertive and partially cooperative. The employer attempts to find an expedient, mutually acceptable solution which partially satisfies both parties, i.e. the employer and the workers. In compromises, concessions are made and certain things are given up to gain something else. This is seeking a middle road position.

(viii) Mass Meetings: This is another strategy open to the management or employer to resolve an industrial dispute. Usually, a number of workers are invited to a meeting to discuss their grievances and agree on how to resolve them.

Weapons Open to Individuals

(i)   Snubbing (either party can decide to ignore the other).

(ii)   Hindering or hampering promotions (in superordinate-subordinate conflicts) if in a position to do so.

(iii)   Insubordination (by subordinates) - outright disrespect or disregard.

(iv)   Physical attacks or assaults on those who have offended them.

(v)   Threat or intimidation — the individual may threaten whoever have offended him or her to submission.

Having discussed the above mechanisms, we should state that there are others that are rather restricted or could be termed specific. For instance, when in interpersonal, inter-subordinate or superordinate and subordinate conflicts, attempts could be made to change the behaviour of the individual through appeals or moral suasion. At times it

may also be possible to reassign an individual in the conflict to another organization. Tasks and work locations can also be re-arranged (Koontz, 2007).

Functional Consequences of Conflicts

(1)   Conflict stimulates organizational growth and development.

(2)   It enhances the making of better decisions and the formulation of meaningful policies in organizations.

(3)   It helps to promote a round-table conference that can aid organizational growth and bring about the exchange of ideas.

(4)   It enhances social solidarity and understanding.

(5)   It helps views and values to be analyzed and classified appropriately.

(6)   It spurs acceptable actions from conflicting parties.

(7)   It promotes learning or understanding of organizational variables.

(8)   It propels the search for new techniques.

(9)   It brings about technological development.

(10)   It helps to put at bay long-standing problems or issues when resolved amicably.

(11)   Conflict propels creativity in man and in the organization and brings about innovations.

(12)   It enhances the mobilization of dormant and functional resources.

(13)   It strengthens relationship and brings about a harmonious relationship between or among parties in organizations.

(14)   It could bring about collective bargaining.

(15)   It could help to foster team work.

(16)   It helps to correct negative impressions in organizations.

Dysfunctional Consequences of Conflict

If organizational conflict is not managed effectively, the following dysfunctional consequences may occur:

(1)   It could bring about a halt in organizational operations

(2)   It could bring about damages that may be difficult to replace.

(3)   It could lead to negative interpretations and impressions that may cast aspersions on the parties involved in the conflict or either of them.

(4)   It could produce low morale in the workforce of the organization

(5)   It could bring about low productivity in affected organizations

(6)   It could lead to a communication breakdown capable of prolonging the conflict

(7)   It could result to the termination of the conflicting workers (although this has been found to be unproductive as it is usually resisted), which could in turn endanger the labour market.

(8)   Unresolved conflict could produce enmity in organizations between the parties involved.

(9)   It could bring about and strengthen negative ideas or thoughts if unresolved.

(10)   It could lead to loss of competent and experienced labour force in organizations

(11)   It could also hinder competent hands from seeking appointment in conflict-riddled organizations.

(12)   It could make employers/management to be jittery and begin to count their losses.

(13)   It could bring about serious blackmailing on either side of the conflict.

(14)   It could bring about loss of time and money.

(15)   It could lead to loss of human energy expended in plotting defence etc.

Conclusion

There is no doubt that just as conflicts abound in human beings so also does it abound in organizations. In this chapter, we have adopted a holistic approach in highlighting the nature, types, causes and mechanisms for conflict resolution in private or public organizations because in general terms they share commonalities in this regard.

The fact however remains that even though we agree that conflict is a necessary evil, there is need to avoid it where possible because of its dysfunctional consequences. A manufacturer, for example, will stand to lose huge profits if production boycotts are allowed for a long time. The situation will be worse if such a manufacturer is compelled to pay the workers for all boycotts. It may not even end there. The manufacturer may lose his customers, as chances are that they may find other manufacturers. Also, to buttress the wise saying that "when two elephants fight, the grass suffers", the customers of the manufacturer/producers will also suffer. Thus, it becomes a chain of very negative reactions. When individuals are involved, they compound progress in the organization since the team spirit that is capable of bringing about enhanced co-operation and productivity will be hindered. This also has its own chain of reactions.

In public organizations, the matter is worse as public or essential services will be paralyzed. If medical doctors go on strike, for example, the mortality rate will increase. Since many people will die for want of treatment. If lecturers go on strike, the educational system will be paralyzed. Not only this, the students who normally should

be in their classroom will become a workshop for the devil as they will become useful tools for crime and other atrocities in the society, thereby increasing crime rate. As the saying goes, "an idle mind is the devil's workshop". Having said this, it is important to mention that no organization can afford to be in conflict with its workforce all the time. A good manager and management must therefore learn how to nip conflict in the bud.

Our position in this chapter, therefore, is that conflict is highly dysfunctional and should be avoided at all cost. All its functionalities to us can still be achieved without getting to a conflicted situation. The question that may readily come to mind is: "How do we then avoid conflicts?" And our answer is simply this: avoid all those things that give rise to conflicts. For example, if an authoritarian leadership style is identified as a cause of conflict in an organization, then the leader should refrain from it and embrace a participatory leadership style (Koontz, 2007). Also, if lack of communication is identified as a course of conflict, refrain from it and embrace effective communication (Ola, 2001).

Above all, where conflict cannot be avoided, there is need to embrace dialogue in resolving it. What we have in mind here is a round-table or conference dialogue or discussion, for, as Winston Churchill once put it, "it is better to jaw-jaw than to war-war".

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