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Conflict management: Reason, reaction, resolve, reconcile and revive

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Abstract
Conflict is a part and parcel of life. Even in the organizational setup, Conflict plays an important role. It sometimes occurs within a person and sometimes with the factors present around him. Conflict is important because if an individual is able to overcome it, he emerges as a winner. In the organizational setup, a manager must know how important it is to manage conflict and give it a right direction. If conflict arises within an individual and he learns to deal with it, following the techniques suggested by Thomas Kilmann, he learns a good deal of tackling a situation. If a manager is able to resolve the conflicts arising in the organization, he will be able to motivate employees, gain respect and maximize productivity. A manager and the individual must have the insight on resolving conflicts in a better way to emerge out of it positively. There are various theories of conflict propounded by great thinkers. They decide the pattern of confronting or giving up to the conflicts. In a sense, conflicts are considered bad because they generate stress but they are good because if the conflict situation is won, it leads to a more powerful individual who will never give up to the same situation of conflict again. So, an individual must know conflict management.

Keywords: Conflict, motivate, productivity, theories, stress, management

Introduction
Smith (1966) [14] defines conflict as "It is a circumstance where incompatibility between individual arises because they have differences in their goals and their way of doing things." It shows that conflict is the disagreement of many factors between individuals.
Conflict is an indispensable part of a workplace but its outcome depends on the way how person manages it. (Almost J, Doran D, Hall L, Laschinger H., 2010) [1]. Conflict is any disagreement that occurs in an individual with himself, with others or with his environment. Conflict arises within oneself due to innumerous reason; sometimes it is due to the many roles, he has to perform; at times, it is because of the role overload when he has to perform many roles at the same time, conflict arises with others due to behavioural differences or during the performance of a task. Conflict is common in the organizational setup and it gives birth to many problems. The problems arise due to less or no understanding, dissatisfaction, varied views and arguments. (Mills, Roseline & Taripanyeofori, Mene, 2020) [9].
When the individual is uncertain about the expectations from him, when the things are poorly communicated, when there is vagueness about the jurisdiction when there are differences in viewpoints, when the interests are conflicting and when the individual faces changes in his usual routine in the organization, conflict arises frequently. (Umiker W O, 1998) [16].

Objectives to be met
1. The study will try to establish the possible causes of conflicts in the organization and its outcome.
2. Employees' reaction to conflict will be assessed.
3. The manager's sole in subsiding or controlling conflicts will be seen.
4. The impact of conflicts on employees will be discussed.
5. Conflict control process and theories of conflict will be interpreted.
6. Suggestions for conflict management will be provided.

Literature Review
Conflict can have a positive or negative, both impacts on the proper activity of groups and individuals. (Robbins, 1991) [12].

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Conflict is seen in a bad light by the people of traditional mindset. Though the name itself suggests some negativity but conflict is seen in a positive light by many people. It is stated by the traditional minded people that conflict is bad and it should be avoided. (Robbins, 2005) [13]. Conflict as suggested by many thinkers, sometimes lead to positive outcome as the individual who faces it, gets to know how to deal with it and be ready to face such conflicts with confidence in future. It's a fact that conflict will always be a part of an individual's life and the organization but what is most important is to manage it with utmost skills. (Overton, A. R., & Lowry, A. C., 2013) [10]. Conflicts need to be dealt with care. A single mistake in handling conflicts can lead to turnover of the aggrieved employees, can generate bad feelings in them and can somewhere give rise to litigations which may be very costly. (Hirschman, 2001) [7].

Manager in the organizations have many skills to boost the morale of their employees, to motivate them towards the desired goals to be achieved. Out of many competencies expected in a manager, managing conflicts is one of the key competencies. (N. Wang, Jiang, & Pretorius, 2016) [11].

If there is hostility among groups, or the limitations are imposed on one group by the others, conflict arises. (Denohue, and Kott.1992) [6]. So, the managers must know the dexterous way to tackle both the groups where conflict has already arisen and find a midway to control conflict. If a manager is able to generate a feeling of team work in the employees and maintain an environment of collaboration, will he be able to make the employees understand the importance of common goals and organizational success lying in their effective performance. (Tschannen-Moran, 2001) [15].

Conflict sometimes results in giving experience to tackle a problem most skillfully. Conflict can be dealt in either a positive or negative way and it decides its nature whether it is going to be a constructive conflict or a destructive conflict. (Cetin and Hacifazlioglu, 2004) [4]. Conflict is considered bad, unnecessary and harmful for its own, so some people avoid it and doesn't want to come in contact with it. (Certo, 1997) [3].

When there is diversity of people, there is diversity in viewpoints and when diverse viewpoints do not align with the other group or individual, conflict occurs. There is a kind of conflict which is called interpersonal conflict which occurs in people when they have contradictory beliefs, aims, wants and viewpoints. (Antonioni, 1998) [2].

Conflict doesn't start all of a sudden rather it's a gradual process which unfolds in many ways. Pondy (1967) introduced five stages of conflict emergence which some or the other way are true to sequence:

i. **Latent Conflict**: Latent literally means hidden. In the initial stage, conflict is latent. It is growing up inside a person due to certain adverse situations but he is unaware of it. He sees it, remains indifferent but it is generating some sort of unknown discomfort.

ii. **Perceived Conflict**: Here, the individual starts perceive a wrong in things. he starts to sniff the wrongs present around him but whether they are harming him or not is not felt by him. He just has an unfelt sense of the same.

iii. **Felt Conflict**: Here, an individual starts feeling the conflict and the response begins to generate. They start feeling frustration, stress etc. It is not at the perception level where he just feels an unknown sensation of something wrong, rather he gets the feeling about the particular wrong happening with him.

iv. **Manifest Conflict**: Here, the resultant reaction. The actual conflict behaviour is visible here in the form of anger, withdrawal or gloom.

v. **Conflict Aftermath**: In the aftermath, an individual can either emerge as a winner defeating conflict or he would give up before such conflict and remain antagonized with the situation.

Types of conflict
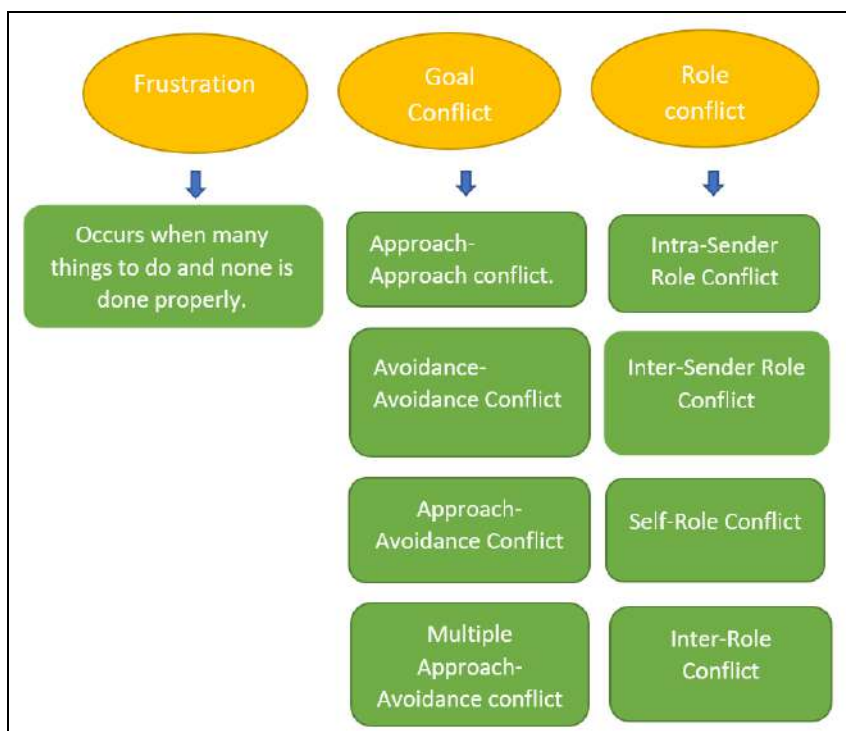**Individual level Conflict:** Individual level conflicts are of the following types:

Fig 1: Types of Individual level conflict

Frustration: Frustration in an individual occurs when he is not able to do what he wants to. When the individual wants to achieve or do many things at the same time and he is unable to do that, he gets frustrated due to the conflict which arises in his various desires. His reaction to that comes out in the form of aggression, then withdrawal when he gives up, at times he fixes on to one of the things out of all to suppresses conflict within him and at times he compromises with the situation getting satisfying with some and leaving some part of it.

Goal Conflict: Goal conflict occurs when a person is stuck between two goals due to their positive or negative effects. Here, he is unable to decide on which goal to pursue first due to the aspects adjoined with them. There are the following types of goal conflicts:
a. **Approach-approach conflict**: In this type of conflict, the individual wants to approach all goals coming his way due to positive values attached with both the goals but his dilemma remains in which goal to achieve and which to leave due to positive aspect of both.
b. **Avoidance-avoidance conflict**: Here, the individual finds both the goals with negative values and he wants to leave both but he has to choose one goal. His dilemma is he wants to leave both the goals with negative and repulsive aspects but he is compelled to take with least negative aspects.
c. **Approach-avoidance conflict**: In this type of conflict, the same goal has a positive aspect and a negative aspect. The person remains in lurch to accept the goal because of its positive value or leave it because of its negative value.
d. The above three conflict approaches are given by Kurt Lewin (Lewin, K. 1997) [8] but later one more approach was added which is as follows;
e. **Multiple-approach-avoidance conflict**: It is almost the same as approach-avoidance conflict but unlike the former it has multiple positive or negative aspects attached with the same goal and a person has to measure whether to choose the goal because of the good values attached to the goal or weigh the negative goals first before choosing the goal which arises conflict within an individual.

Role Conflict: an individual, while doing a job in the personal or the professional front plays a role, he finds best suitable to his job. According to his intellect, he does the job well but if the expected role in the job is different from the role he plays, role conflict arises. Moreover, role conflict arises when he has to play a role of someone, he actually is not or he is not comfortable with it.
This kind of overlapping causes conflict to the persons role performance and efficiency.
There may be four types of role conflicts:
(i). **Intra-sender Role Conflict**: This type of role-conflict arises when a person is not able to perform the roles given to him. No one says anything but hands him over the incompatible roles which he is not able to perform as per expectations because they are not according to the role he is performing; this leads to conflict within himself and it is intra-sender role conflict.
(ii). **Inter-sender Role Conflict**: There are many senders who give different roles to individuals, if the role given by many individuals to the receiver clashes, the player

of the role gets frustrated and it leads to inter-sender role conflict.
(iii). **Self-Role Conflic**t: the individual consider himself as a personality carrying certain potential and characteristics. If the role given to him clashes with the role, he thinks himself to be made for, self-role conflict occurs. This is conflict between one's own self and the role given.
(iv). **Inter Role Conflict**: Inter role conflict arises when an individual occupies multiple and divergent roles simultaneously and the expectations associated with these different roles are incompatible.
Role expectations should be clearly communicated in a person in the organization or personally as well. If they do not understand the role properly, it leads to many issues resulting into conflicts at the workplace:

a. **Role Ambiguity**: If the person is not told about the role or it is vaguely conveyed, it will not be performed properly and with utmost efficiency by the individual. It will result in stress and demoralized employees.
b. **Role Conflict**: When the role is properly conveyed, but the person while playing one role cannot play the other role properly, conflict arises in him leading to stress and resulting in conflict within him and at the workplace.
c. **Role Overload**: When a person has to play many roles at a time, he gets affected by role overload and it results in conflicts. If a person is handed over many roles at a time by the manager, he is not able to do any of these roles with maximum efficiency resulting into conflict within himself.

Interpersonal Conflict
Interpersonal conflict emerges between two sides. It can be between a single person with another individual, with one person and a group within the same organization or with the other organization.
According to Whetten and Cameron, there are four sources of interpersonal conflict.
I) **Personal Differences**: A person is brought up in a varied culture, follows various norms, owns unique family values, get different education and experience. All these things make him an entirely unique person and due to that he is different from all others. These unique characteristics sometimes hinders him from accepting the other persons point of view and conflict occurs between him and the other individual at the workplace.
II) **Information Deficiency**: If information is not disseminated properly, the individual remains in confusion, this leads to frustration and generates conflict.
III) **Role Incompatibility**: Some roles become incompatible in a person due to many different roles to be played by the single person. If he plays one role proficiently, the other role is compromised or sometimes the interdependent roles are compromised because when one role is not completed, the other role suffers.
IV) **Environment Stress**: There are many things which goes on continuously around the individual. While performing a role efficiently, he interacts with the environment and the environment too, have certain positive aspects which helps the individual to fulfill his

duties. When there are environmental hurdles in the workplace like limited resources, unhealthy competition or job insecurity, he is unable to fulfill his roles and that generates conflict.

Group Level Conflict

Group is formed with two or more individuals. They are of similar status and defined structure. They have interrelated works with the other departments and when there is any conflict arises between one group and the other, it is termed as group level conflict which is of two types:

a) **Intra Group Conflict**: This type of conflict arises amongst the member of the same group. The members form the group because of many similarities but during the course of time, there may be some differences in the form of one or two members having a different opinion. This results in intra-group conflict.

b) **Inter Group Conflict**: Contrary to intra-group conflict, in this type of conflict, problem arises between different groups. The groups may be working on the same task but having interrelated works and start having a conflict over some issue related to the same task.

Organisational Level Conflict

This type of conflict arises in the organization. It must be between the parties in the organization or related to it like the clients, the buyers, the unions, the government, the lawmakers etc.

Reasons of conflict

Positional differences: Differences in hierarchical level leads to conflicts because what is right and important may not be important for the employees.

Individual differences: Individual differences lead to many conflicts. Conflict arises when there are personality differences, differences in individual goals, ego clashes and other differences. One viewpoint might not be acceptable to the other and lead to conflict situation.

Vague directions: Conflict can arise when the directions are not clear about who is responsible for what. If in an organisation, the instructions and roles are not clearly conveyed, it results in role ambiguity and inter role conflicts.

Interdependency: Dependence on one another also is a reason of conflict. When the timelines are met by one party and not by another, when sincerity is expected in one task but it is not performed sincerely by the other, conflict arises. In other words, the more collaboration and interdependency is there, the more chances of conflict form.

Communication gap: If things are not communicated properly, there is ambiguity in instructions, there is communication gap, conflict happens. When instructions are vague and not understood, conflict within oneself and conflict with others occur.

Limited resources: If resources are limited and everyone has to use it feasibly and give maximum output from the same limited resources, conflict occur among those parties.

Varied working style: Conflict arises because everyone has his own unique style of working and sometimes it is not liked by others. Someone's preferable style of working might irritate and offend the other's working pattern.

Theories of conflict management

The well-established instrument devised by Thomas Kilmann measures an individual's during conflict situations. This instrument measures the assertiveness or cooperativeness of a person in conflicting situations. If he is co-operative, he attempts to understand other people's concern and if he is assertive, he gives importance to his desires only.

Assertiveness and cooperativeness are underlying human behaviours while dealing with conflict situations using the following ways:

Competing: When an individual deals with conflict being competing, he wants to defeat the other party at any cost and win even staking the others. Competing individual is assertive and uncooperative. He is concerned only about his welfare at the cost of others.

A manager must avoid this conflict at the workplace and mold the employee behaviour towards collaboration instead of competition.

Accommodating: Accommodating individuals are unassertive and cooperative. They can accommodate themselves according to the needs of others and adjusts his own needs according to the concerns of the others.

A manager must guide each and every individual to accommodate and if not, all should be encouraged to collaborate not accommodate.

Avoiding: Avoiding is unassertive and uncooperative. Here, the person altogether avoids the situation. He neither fulfills his own wish nor bother about the wish of others. He doesn't deal with conflict rather he avoids the situation in totality and remains a mute spectator.

Avoiding is not the solution, so the manager must help every employee to face the conflict instead of avoiding it.

Collaborating: Collaborating is both assertive and cooperative. Contrary to avoiding himself and the other, collaborating takes care of one's own concerns and collaborate with others making their concerns one's own. Collaborating aligns the concerns of others with the concerns of the individual. So, he is assertive in obliging his concerns and cooperative in collaborating with others.

Collaboration is the best a manger can ingrain in his employees as it makes both the parties happy and both get what they want by collaborating with each other.

Compromising: Compromising is moderate in both assertiveness and cooperativeness. Both, the individual and the others' concern are met in some way but not completely. Mutually accepted solutions are found that satisfy both the parties partially.

Compromising is not a long-term solution as no on is satisfied after compromising. Both do not get what they want. At times it can be an arm to avoid conflict but it keeps both the parties dissatisfied.

According to the author any conflict-handling mode cannot be called the best mode as it depends on the situation how one uses them. Sometimes it is rational to use compromising

when the situation may result in a worst outcome and avoiding can also be helpful when competing can lead to

extensive arguments.

Fig 2: Self-interpretation of Thomas Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument by researcher.

Reaction of employees to conflict
Conflict should be handled skillfully by the managers. If conflicts are not handled with care, they may lead to the following problems:

Work performance deterioration
If an employee faces any kind of conflict around or within him, he feels anxiety and stress and sometimes the resultant behaviour is a volcanic anger and if the behaviour is not visible in the form of anger, his aversion towards work raises, he starts committing mistakes, he remains frustrated and all this impacts his efficiency to work. The work which has to be done within a time limit is wasted in sorting out the conflict and if the result is avoiding or compromising, someone is always dissatisfied with that.

Low Employee Morale
If the conflicts somewhere result in withdrawal, the employee remain dissatisfied and it remains visible in his work outcome. His morale goes down due to dissatisfaction. With low morale, he will be less motivated resulting in low organizational outcome. Low employee morale is a psychological phenomenon but it affects the health and outcome of the employees and the organizational outcome as well.

Loss of Revenue
A company's revenue indirectly depends on conflict management. If an employee is facing conflicts at workplace and he is dissatisfied with its solution or he is facing role conflict, role overload, then his work efficiency will surely decrease and it will result in low work efficiency from the end of the employees and it will further result in reduced turnover of the company. It can reduce customer, satisfaction in the long run as a dissatisfied employee will not be able to meet the customer's satisfaction well.

Communication gap
Communication gap imposes a lot of bad impact on

individuals and teams leading to workplace conflicts. If the messages are not communicated well, if the instructions are unclear and if the mental status of people is entirely different, then it would lead to wide gaps in communication. If a person does not understand the communicated matter, it will result in a conflict with oneself and the others. Communication gaps should be sorted out as early as possible without biases and taking sides.

Expected reaction of the manager
A manager needs to take rational decisions and be open minded while resolving conflicts. Some managers may own the key characteristics required to resolve conflicts but some can do that with maintaining their calm and understanding the real problem thoroughly.

Remain Unbiased
A manager should always try to find out the reason of conflicts and remain unbiased while solving it. He should first get into the root cause of any conflict, then listen to all arguments and then finally reach to a decision keeping a neutral attitude. This way none of the parties would feel neglected and the conflict will be solved.

Actively Listen
An active listener is also a boon when an aggrieved person feels like venting out his grievances. Sometimes, just listening with an empathetic attitude makes the other person feels understood. The active listener can make a rational and intellectual decision by getting deep into the content. Managers should avoid being judgmental and listen attentively while trying to solve a conflict.

Facilitate conversation
More the communication, more is the clarity. Manager must facilitate conversation if he finds that misunderstanding has piled up because of lack of proper communication. Both parties should be given an opportunity to clearly state their problems and talk to the other party about the same.

Sometimes, the problem is no problem and it clears off just with a talk.

Practice Empathy

The Hawthrone experiments proved that empathy of seniors towards their subordinates raises a feeling of belongingness in them. They start working efficiently because they are heard empathetically. Being empathetic with the employees is a key skill required by a manger to motivate his employees towards their goals and develop a trustworthy relationship. Thus, a manager must show sympathy to the employees but remain empathetic at the same time to their problems. They must feel that the managers are feeling the same pain as they are bearing. This will develop cordial superior subordinate relationship and such employees will avoid indulging an any conflict at the workplace which will get them in a bad light before the manager.

Focus on issues not on people

The managers while resolving conflicts must focus on issues not people. Any wrong doing should be curbed but the person should not be pointed. One should not be targeted before a lot of people rather the conflicting behaviour should be reformed.

Use Emotional Intelligence

While tackling conflicts related to human resource, managers should be emotionally intelligent to tackle the feeling of the employees. When the employees feel that they are personally understood, they gain a sense of satisfaction and most of their grievances ultimately vanish.

Steps to be followed for conflict resolution

In a workplace, conflict management is a skill which a manager must know to avoid workplace conflicts because they lead to low employee morale, low efficiency, high turnover and lesser revenue for the organization. So, to resolve conflicts, these five steps can be followed:

Step 1: Define the root cause of conflict

To resolve a conflict, managers must know the cause of it. Only if the cause is known, it can be comprehended well and that cause which led to a conflict, can be removed. The parties involved in the conflict must be dealt with attentively and the reason whether felt or real, should be diagnosed to come to a feasible verdict which makes both the parties happy.

Step 2: Look beyond the incident

Manager should have a rational sixth sense. He should not believe in what is shown to him but he should use his intellect and get into the depth of the conflict to read between the lines. Even if a detail is not shared with him, he should have enough curiosity to get the facts from all sources available and get to a correct and all acceptable resolution.

Step 3: Generate alternate solutions

After getting into the depth of conflict, find out plausible solutions for the same. In this step, first generate alternate solutions and now find out the best alternate which fit into the conflict resolution. Having many solutions in hand will help the manager to come to the most appropriate solution to resolve a conflict.

Step 4: Implement solutions according to the pleasure of both the parties

Both the parties should be listened to and both should accept the implemented solution. None of the conflicting parties must feel avoided due to the resolution. So. The responsibility of an unbiased and feasible resolution lies on to the shoulder of the manager.

Reconcile and revive

In all the steps of conflict, the manager diagnoses, draws out and rectifies the conflicts. Alongwith these steps, he has to make the conflicting parties reconcile. If the conflict is left just after implementing the verdict, it may lead to the return of the previous situation. Reconciliation is an important point in resolving a conflict as it forbids further chaos amongst the conflicting parties.

Other than that, the manager must be able to revive the older peaceful atmosphere where no conflict was there. The process of reconciliation is important as it is not imposed on any of the parties rather it is accepted willingly and remains for longer duration when accepted not imposed. The after effects of reconciliation is peace in the environment and satisfaction and amity among parties. They start following each other, help one another and collaborate well which develops a rich interpersonal relationship. Reconciled environment within an organization leads to peace, cooperation, increased work efficiency, no communication gap, no conflicting behaviour, employee engagement, low turnover, satisfied clients and customers and increased revenue for the company.

This way, the manager revives and rejuvenates the environment and the employees, who like to work in a peaceful environment, giving their best.

Suggestions

Conflict is inevitable, so managers must have the key competency to deal with conflicts.

Conflict can be internal and external both and both can have a negative impact on an individual and an organization, so the root cause of conflict should be at hand to resolve it.

All the conflict resolution steps should be followed thoroughly by the manager, so no wrong decision is taken.

Manages must listen properly and empathetically to the conflicting parties so the decisions taken are not wrong and satisfactory to both the parties. The verdict should not have any biases and both the conflicting parties must feel that they were heard of their grievances.

Persons suffering from internal conflicts, must be dealt with empathy and they should be given variety of jobs with job enrichment, job enlargement, training and coaching programs for their development. Wherever required, employees should be given individualized attention from the manager to give him the feeling of significance and belongingness.

As much as possible, communication gaps should be eradicated as most of the conflicts are resolved only if talked clearly. There should be opportunities for informal gatherings where everyone can get along well and talk about the issues raised in the formal set-up.

Employee morale can go down due to internal or external conflict. So, managers must be aware enough to resolve such conflicts in the initial stage otherwise it may lead to negativity from the end of the employee.

After implementing the decision to resolve conflict, the

managers must help the parties reconcile as it will help in reducing the same conflict in future and the manager must get maximum satisfaction from the employees' end if they have reconciled.

Conclusion
Since conflict at the workplace is inevitable, what a manager can do is to deal skillfully with it. We see that conflict passes from many phases, from latent to manifested conflict. Conflict aftermath is also important as it is sometimes positive and gives a rich learning experience to all but sometimes it has negative aspects which lead to low employee morale and turnover of the employees leading to a shattering organization in the long run. It is important for a manager to know if conflict is inner or outer, if conflict is borne just due to the over thinking of the employee or there is really an underlying reason for the same. A manager must decipher and comprehend the real reason and find out the most feasible solution which satisfy the conflicting parties. The inner conflict of an individual must be satisfied by knowing the right reason by the manager and giving him the opportunities to try his hand on learning many skills in different jobs through job enlargement and enrichment. The monotony of the job needs to be broken to remove inner conflicts in an employee. The manager can handle outer conflicts by listening actively to the employees, by being empathetic, by improving communication, by focusing on the real reason and by helping both parties to confront one another and vent the real issues before each other. Conflict is individual level where the employee is frustrated, the goals he wants to achieve have many positive and negative aspects from which the employee has to choose one, then there are interpersonal or organizational level conflicts which must be handled by the managers with skills and competency. Managers can listen empathetically and listen to each and every detail given by the employee to solve his problems leading to any conflict. Conflict is important to be removed in the initial stage only as it may cause negative results but solving it in a proper way may generate fighting spirit in an employee and conflict management skills in a manager.

Conflict management is considered a key skill required in a manager because if an employee has to deal with conflicts in his everyday work-life or personal life, it would lead to stress, frustration, fear and low morale. To keep employee morale high and to reduce stress from his life, the conflict within him and his life has to be removed. A manager must manage conflict in a positive way or it would result in employee turnover, stressed workplace environment, bad impact on employees' work efficiency, low interest in work and mistakes while working. If a manager manages conflict positively, the employee coming out after defeating that conflict and the manager who has resolved that conflict, both will have raised confidence levels to deal with conflict in a positive and productive way and it will enrich the work environment of the organization.

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