CHAPTER II
NATURE OF CONFLICT

Conflict is a characteristic of human experience, and had been there from the beginning of humanity, as an inevitable fact of human interactions and operations. It is in the family, social life, politics and in business. In reality, conflict is pervasive in all human experiences as a natural part of life brought on by our beliefs, experiences and values (Fitro, www.ohioline.su.edu). Down through the history, human situation has always been fraught with conflicts of various natures. The earliest legends, which were formed before recorded history, recorded classic conflicts: between authorities and subordinates - God and Adam; between brothers - Cain and Abel; and between marriage partners - Adam and Eve ("Managing," www.aviarygroup.ca). Indeed, conflict is a dynamic phenomenon and it affects human life. It is part of the human psyche and is the experience of each person. The whole cosmos in fact, experience conflict in one way or other. The world constantly witnesses the cosmic conflict of good and evil; God and Satan are eternally in conflict. Evil is always in opposition with good. In every person, there is the presence of good and evil; inclinations that are good or evil, which are always in opposition.

The important factor in life is not having a conflict, but the ability to resolve conflict. Having Conflict can be beneficial. It can strengthen and purify a person. The normal tendency is to avoid conflict since we associate it with anger and as such destructive. But conflict is a normal human experience that happens continually. It can be a constructive and positive experience for all parties involved, if it is resolved amicably (Rinchart, http://ohioline.osu.edu).
The concept of conflict is a vast one, and include within its purview coercive and violent mode of confrontation, which is often destructive. However, a non-violent struggle in pursuit of goals, values and scarce resources could also indicate conflict (Jeong 3). The focus of the discussion, however, will be limited to the interpersonal and intrapersonal levels. Nevertheless, we shall define the term ‘conflict’ in its generic sense and offer insights into the types of conflict, causes and some methods of resolving them.

Conflict is much more noticeable and much more felt these days. It is further aggravated in today’s context with the progress in technology, global shifting of power, political unrest, financial uncertainties and the like. Conflict connotes the idea of hostility, aggression, withdrawal, power struggles and opposition. The fact is that conflict is present within organizations and is endemic irrespective of whether or not it is desirable (Rout, and Nelson 2). Conflict can be horrible, “hurtful, harmful and disruptive of relationships and personal well-being” (Hugget 19). Therefore, it is important to understand the term conflict.

The term conflict has many meanings in everyday life, and can refer to a behaviour or action. We often associate it with hostility, aggression, withdrawal, power struggles, disagreement and opposition (Rinchart, http://ohioline.osu.edu). In simple term conflict is an expression of disagreement over something important to both parties involved. The disagreement occurs when the same resources cannot meet the demands at the same time (Wallensteen 14). This disagreement can take place every day, and when it builds up and accumulates without being resolved, conflict arises.
Any natural disagreement that occurs among individuals or groups that differ in attitudes, beliefs, values or needs is a conflict. In fact conflict etymologically originates from two Latin words, *con* which would mean together and *figere* which means to strike. Hence, conflict denotes a kind of strife between two or more persons (Hugget 19). In human interactions any situation of struggle, strong disagreement, clash, opposition or contention are indicative of conflicts.

Conflict indicates a kind of a distress due to mental struggle, which is an outcome of an incompatible or opposing impulse. It manifests the “overtones of war and battles, with allies on one side and enemies on the other” where both parties are out for victory (Jones, G 4). We can notice in conflict, a struggle for mastery, a combat to overcome, and the involvement of opposing forces and differing objectives. The words like dispute, disagreement, incompatibility and difference of opinion indicate the presence of a conflict. In conflict, we perceive a mutually incompatible situation; an overt expression of tensions between goals or concerns of a differing parties (Rout, and Nelson 4). It can imply three things; incompatibility, action and actors. And basing on these things Peter Wallensteen defines conflict as “a social situation in which a minimum of two actors (parties) strive to acquire at the same moment in time an available set of scarce resources” (14-15). According to E. L. Rout and Nelson Omika:

Conflict is a complex processes. There are three factors that influence conflict. They are attitudes, behaviours and structure. Each factor influences and is influenced by the others. *Attitudes* include the parties’ perceptions and misperceptions of each other and of themselves. These can be positive or negative. *Behaviours* can include cooperation or
coercion, gestures signifying conciliation or hostility. Violent conflict behaviour is characterized by threats, coercion and destructive attacks. Structures refer to the organizational mechanisms, processes and groups that influence recognition and identity needs (5).

In conflict, there is always the disagreement through which the parties involved perceive a threat to their needs, interests or concerns. Conflict tends to be accompanied by significant levels of misunderstanding wherein the perceived disagreement is often exaggerated. Most often conflict occurs because people tend to respond to the perceived threat rather than to the true threat. They tend to respond based on their perception of the perceived threat, rather than on an objective review of it. They filter their perceptions through variables like "values, culture, beliefs, information, experience, gender" ("About Conflict," www.ohrd.wise.edu). Essentially, conflict situation demonstrates that parties to conflict have trouble in meeting their goals simultaneously. Both feel threatened and thus make effort to obstruct the other from obtaining the desired goals. This is partly due to apparent "perception of divergent interests." The natural outcome is tension between the parties due to disagreement on the means to achieve the same end (Jeong 5). Here both the parties perceive incompatible goals and thus 'seek to undermine each other's goal seeking capability' ("Conflict," http://en.wikipedia.org).

While analyzing the various definitions of conflict, we can pick out three components – cognitive, behavioural and affective, and these corresponds to the three aspects of conflict, namely, disagreement, interference and negative emotions respectively. Disagreement is an issue that is frequently associated with workplaces and caused by divergent values, needs, interests, opinions, goals and objectives. This highlights the
Analysis of conflict will indicate certain elements that contribute to conflict situation. Conflict arises because of the incompatibility of element such as goals, interests, methods of working, or any other feature. The different degrees and types of incompatibility will shape the course of the conflict situation. Then, there is the perception of threat in the other’s aggressive behaviour, which calls forth an emotional response of intense anger, anxiety and fear (Jeong 11). Conflict is a dynamic process as it indicates a series of events. Moreover, for conflict to exist, it must be perceived and expressed by the parties. If no one is aware of a conflict, it does not exist.

Conflict involves the presence of contesting parties. These parties would directly oppose one another in the pursuit of their respective goals (23). Each party would then garner new allies and sympathizers. However,
Another element in a conflict is interest. It is the political, economic, occupational, and social aspirations of individuals and groups, which motivate the parties to achieve their objectives (26). The difference in interest triggers conflict, as both parties would formulate policies and tactics to satisfy their needs and values. However, interests can alter with the motivation and expectation of the original parties can change, as the interests of the allies will not always be the same. The ability of the party to be effectively engaged in a conflict depends quite largely “to the degree of internal cohesiveness”, and on its ability to mobilize resources, and coordinate the activities of the members (24). We can also include here a third party who seeks to resolve the conflict. The impartial third party tries to explore the areas of mutual interests among the contesting groups (23).

Goal is another component of conflict and is something everyone desires and cares about. Goal incompatibility occurs when both the contesting parties exclusively seek the same thing. The parties involved perceive the interference of each other in the fulfilment of its need or the achievement of its goal. The intensity of the conflict is determined by the value attached to the goal (Collins 21). Goal is the “desirable future conditions that originally motivate the partisans to contest with each other” (Jeong 24).

There is also the presence of an issue, which is in fact the point of disagreement, and that reveals what conflict is about. Issues are related to the need for recognition, respect, and justice or to economic and material concern. The greater the number of issues with different significance, the more complex will be the conflict. The issues can have different layers; “main issue and sub-issues” like the trunk and the branches of a tree. Some issues can be reflective of a root cause or just a symptom of something (Jeong 25).

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circumstances and may be abandoned, if they are not an inherent part of the individual.

The kind of value system one adheres to will determine his/her mode of operation and relationship. Values are defined in terms of beliefs and perspectives that we have about ourselves and other people as they are encountered in society (27). People of different cultural, political, social and economic backgrounds will uphold diverse values. As such, this value differences can lead to conflict.

Human needs are things essential to the well being of the person and indicate universality; they are basic human needs which are intrinsic to survival. The denial of such basic needs of life, like identity, security, and recognition, will lead to a kind of conflict or other. Human needs like “security, personal safety, and development” are commonly sought and “cannot be altered or undermined by authoritarian orders.” A suppression of such needs will only lead to conflict situations (28).

The elements discussed above are quite inherent in conflicts. Human situation in a way is prone to conflicts, but the question of importance is, how do we handle conflict? There is the need for strategy, tactic, and a culture. A wrong strategy in handling conflict situation can trigger off greater conflict.

c. Conflict Process

The cycle of conflict proceeds through a series of recognizable stages or phases as initiation, escalation, de-escalation, and cessation (36). Some see it as starting with a feeling of discomfort leading to incidents of short and sharp exchange. Then motives and facts are confused and misperceived giving rise to misunderstanding, and then relationships are strained and negative attitudes and fixed opinions create a situation of
The natural corollary is an affected behaviour of crisis, where normal functioning becomes difficult and extreme measures are contemplated or executed.

The most commonly described conflict processes or phases are the progressive movement from a level of No conflict to Latent conflict, Conflict Emergence, Conflict Escalation, (Hurting) Stalemate, De-escalation, Settlement/Resolution, Post-Conflict Peace building and Reconciliation. It will always seen that the progress from one stage to the next is not always smooth and conflicts may repeat stages several times. These phases are shown in a diagram below:


Each conflict begins with latent conflict. This is the phase of "unstable peace" and conflict is present in potency. The latent conflict exists when there are differences between groups, but the differences are not big enough a cause to alter the situation. This stage is conditioned by competition for scarce resources, communication barriers, irrational and undesirable kind of relationship between persons in an organization, divergence among groups on goals, values or interests and role
ambiguities. At its roots, latent conflict comprises the possibility of conflict inherent in the different meanings, values, norms, status, and class between people. It involves socio-cultural space as potentialities. Consequently, latent conflict always exists wherever there are more than one person, one group, one society, one culture. Often the seed of latent conflict is rooted in "economic inequality" or the "unequal access to political power." The more privileged party is unaware of the presence of conflict, whereas, the less privileged party may be keenly aware of this. However, conflict does not occur, until they act to change the situation. In such a volatile situation any event can trigger of a conflict which can be long lasting (Brahm, http://www.beyondintractability.org).

It can so happen that a significant tensions or grievances persist over a long period without resulting in a noticeable conflict. However, in the course of time the latent conflict can begin to manifest if the grievances or frustrations are strong enough. Then a "triggering event" can mark the emergence or "eruption" phase of the conflict (Kriesberg, http://www.beyondintractability.org). Conflict emerges only if the situation has become so intense, and one of the parties in contention feels grievously wronged, threatened or opposed. In such tense situation of a perceived threat to a particular group’s well being or existence, an event of certain magnitude is sufficient to trigger off the conflict.

In the wake of conflict escalation, more people tend to get involved, threats increase and may result in violence. If violence is already there, it can intensify involving a large number of participants. When conflict escalates, the party wielding power tries to overcome its opponent’s resistance by force and threats, which, if too extreme, can backfire and provoke retaliation (Bartos, and Paul 99).
Certain conditions facilitate the escalation of conflict, and one of such conditions is the incompatibility of goals. Another condition that can escalate conflict is the threat a party perceives with regard to its identity. This can arouse anger and fear in the party thus adding fuel to conflict escalation. Past grievances, feelings of injustice, and a high level of frustration may also provoke escalation of conflict (Maiese, http://www.beyondintractability.org).

Once conflict escalates, it reaches a point of stalemate: a situation in which neither side can win, but neither party is willing to concede loss either. The reasons for this stalemate are many such as failed tactics, depletion of available resources to fuel the conflict, a reduction in support of the conflict by group members or allies, or costs becoming too high to continue. At this stage, both parties are aware that the conflict is leading them nowhere. But since they have been in conflict for a long time, either party is afraid of the other and reject reconciliation. Individuals on both sides try to seek opportunities to further their economic or political gains rather than seeking solutions to end the conflict. Leaders are afraid to admit mistakes and so they evolve face saving measures. They come to realize that the cost of continuing the conflict exceeds the benefits. Here, both mutually hurts each other and is often the condition to propose a negotiation for settlement (Brahm, http://www.beyondintractability.org).

Conflicts would eventually tone down and get transformed to a certain degree. In course of the struggle, as grievances are reduced, the relations between the adversaries can change, at least on one side, when some rights are partially won. When particular goals become unattainable, they are discarded and other goals, which are achievable with a reasonable means, are considered. Attempts are also be made to make the goals beneficial to both sides. As with goals, methods can become too costly or
ineffective. Supporters may cease to support the goals if norms are violated or the cost of attaining has become burdensome (Kriesberg, http://www.beyondintractability.org).

As conflict ends, the components of conflict such as goals and methods too begin to change. The destruction of either of the conflicting party is no longer considered. Similarly, a political process is often initiated to provide legitimate regulated process for dealing with contention. A greater participation in decision making is offered to groups who had been excluded so far. The conflict can be resolved permanently or at least for a considerable length of time, if most of or all the underlying causes of conflict are finally remedied. However, if there are some grievances not addressed, the conflict can be settled for a time but may erupt again any time. Some conflicts are never resolved permanently and any little grievance can re-escalate the conflict (Kriesberg, http://www.beyondintractability.org).

Conflict can be settled with a peace agreement, but this by no means is the end of all conflicts. Both sides must implement the settlement amicably. Everyone party to the settlement must ensure that it is agreed upon and implemented. The success of the settlement will depend on a long period of peace building which is initiated by “apology, forgiveness and reconciliation.” One important aspect of transforming conflict is to build a strong relation, where everyone feels equal and fear and mistrust is dispelled. At this stage of peace-building, outside mediation can play an important role of monitoring the agreement and demobilization efforts. Besides these the civil society or a third party can provide assistance. Conflict to reach its possible lasting resolution, should initiate reconciliation between the contending parties. It may be a long process, but only this process of reconciliation, will ensure an end to conflict,
otherwise it is likely to occur again at some point in the future (Brahm, http://www.beyondintractability.org).

d. **Types of conflict**

Conflict is endemic to human condition. Our everyday experience suggests that we are confronted with conflict in some way or other. Conflict occurs at different social levels of interactions. It involves opposing forces and differing objectives. We can note four levels of conflict – intra-personal, inter-personal, group and organizational. The study here will be on the intra-personal and inter-personal conflicts.

All spheres of human relationships encounter conflict. In addition to the conflict that a person experiences with other people, there is also the experience of internal conflict, which is known as intra-personal conflict or at times as psychological conflict. In intra-personal conflict too, we notice a competing desires or goals within a person (Collins 51). Intra-personal conflict “involves a choice between mutually exclusive goals or incompatible goals.” For instance, a woman entrepreneur can face the dilemma of choosing to be successful in business and taking care of the family (Rout, and Nelson 24-25). Everyone sometime or the other encounters a conflict within oneself. “This inner conflict can be evidenced by confusion, inconsistency or lack of congruity” (“Nature of Conflict,” www.mediate.com).

Intra-personal conflict is the internal conflict due to the presence of a number of competing needs and roles; a variety of drives compelling an individual to act in a certain way; barriers that come between the drives and the goals; a misunderstanding of the expected job role. Intra-personal conflict can also arise due to frustration, goals and role. A person can come across a frustrating experience if his “motivated drive is blocked before he
can reach his desired goal" (Rout, and Nelson 25). This frustration can express itself in various behaviour patterns like "aggression, withdrawal, rationalization, fixation, intellectualization, regression, displacement and compromise" (26). More intense the desire for the goal, the more will be the intensity of conflict and frustration.

When a person has to select between many alternatives, he can encounter a conflict within himself. Here the selection of one option will eliminate the other. Intra-personal goal conflict, on the nature of the choices, is identified as approach-approach, avoidance-avoidance, approach-avoidance or multiple approach-avoidance conflict.

In the approach-approach conflict, a person is confronted to make a choice between two equally desirable positive goals. For instance, an employer can face this approach-approach conflict when he has to make a choice between two well qualified candidates. In the same way, a job seeker can encounter this kind of conflict when he has to make a choice between two attractive jobs. Here, the person is caught between two powerful choices causing conflict within him. Both the choices have positive valence. A slight change in the valence will make him choose one of the alternatives. But an interesting point in this approach-approach conflict is the regret that comes up later for having chosen the present alternative (27).

In the avoidance-avoidance conflict, a person faces two equally undesirable options (Collins 51). This is a case of goals with negative valence and a person has to make a choice of one. An example of this negative valence can be a student who is a vegetarian has to eat either chicken or fish during a ragging period; if he eats, he goes against his belief, if he doesn’t he offends the seniors (Rout, and Nelson 27). As a person moves closer to the other negative goal, he discovers that too is
Another form of intrapersonal conflict is the approach-avoidance, where an individual is both “attracted to and repelled by the same goal” (Collins 51). The conflict here is to decide to approach or avoid a particular goal which has both positive and negative qualities (Rout, and Nelson 28).

The most persistent and pernicious conflict for any person is not the battering from outside but the inner turmoil that often disturbs the equilibrium. In fact, most conflict is inner conflict. It seems human beings by their nature experience the conflict within. For instance, Eve battled not so much with the tempter, but with herself – what she was and what she might become (Hugget 37). This is a conflict which every one of us experience although the intensity and degree will differ. This inner conflict will often cause untold hurt and stress.

Intrapersonal Conflict is experienced by a person with different roles to play. A role is, “A set of expected behavior patterns attributed to someone occupying a given position in a social unit” (Hannan, www.scribd.com). Roles are the “various masks and positions people fill throughout their lives” (Orwell, www.ehow.com). A person can be a father, boss or employee, lawyer or doctor. So too a mother can be a lawyer or doctor or an employee. In fact, a role is the normative status like behaviour, attitude, and values assigned by society to a person occupying a position (Hannan, www.scribd.com).

Everyone as a part of the society will have a role to play. Most people have multiple roles to fill. When these roles collide a psychological and sociological event called role conflict occurs (Orwell,
Role conflict occurs when an individual is confronted by divergent role expectations, and has to perform two or more incompatible and colliding roles. An example of such role incompatibility would be the need to be in a business meeting (professional role) and at the same time to be at a child’s performance (parental role). A person has to decide which role is more important, and what will be the consequences in the end. Missing the child’s performance would mean disappointing the child, losing his/her confidence for the rest of his/her life, and if he misses the meeting, it would mean possible problems at work, may be financial losses. This is inter-role conflict, where compliance with one will make compliance with the other more difficult. Work-family conflict is an example of inter-role conflict. This kind of “conflict arises from incompatible role requirements between two or more work-related roles” (Rout, and Nelson 31). Role conflict can also arise from role ambiguity, when a person lacks understanding of what is expected or prescribed for a given role (Hannan, www.scribd.com). The need of proper communication and information for individuals to be clear of their rights, duties, privileges and obligations, if lacking, could lead to over-stepping into other territories leading to conflict. Connected with the inter-role conflict is intra-role conflict, which occurs when a person receives conflicting information or contradictory expectations from others regarding a particular role, which is often confusing to the salesperson (Rout, and Nelson 30). The inter-role conflict are high degree of job related tension, low confidence in the company/organization, withdrawal and avoidance. Role conflict is something we all suffer in one way or the other. What is important is to plan to avoid conflict and if conflict does occur to ensure that the negative psychological effects of one role do not spill into the others.
Intrapersonal Conflict can come about in the face of frustration, cognitive dissonance, and neurotic tendencies. “Frustration occurs when a motivated drive is blocked before a person reaches a desired goal” (Rout, and Nelson 25). Cognitive dissonance is present “when individuals discover inconsistencies between two of their attitudes or between their attitudes and their behaviour” (56). These inconsistencies could be “stressful and uncomfortable.” In order to overcome them the individual has to change the thoughts and behaviour or gather some more information about the issue. Neurotic Tendencies are “irrational personality mechanisms” that an individual employs, often unconsciously, and suffer inner conflict. People with this neurotic tendencies distrust others and are often afraid of risk and uncertainty. They operate by emphasizing more on “rules and procedures,” and rely on “hunches and impressions.” Individuals with such neurotic tendencies struggle to resolve their intrapersonal conflict, and consequently get into conflict with others.(57).

Intrapersonal Conflict occurs when a person is having difficulty in making decision because of uncertainty, when the individual is pushed or pulled in the opposite direction, when a person is confronted with simultaneous forces of about equal strength, when a person is required to carry out a task that does not match his/her expertise, interests, goals and values.

Conflict that is experienced between two or more people can be termed as Interpersonal conflict. This kind of conflict can happen in workplaces, homes or any places of human interactions. Conflict generally is understood in term of interpersonal relationship and communication. In the interaction of interdependent persons, conflict can occur when one or both the parties perceive opposition of goals, aims and values and the other is a perceived as interfering with the realization of these goals.
On the interpersonal level, conflict is experienced because both the competing parties are interdependent, angry, and blame each other. Interpersonal conflict includes feelings (emotions), perceptions (thoughts), and actions (behaviours). This indicates that conflict is very much a part of our human nature (Dana 4, 5). E. L. Rout and N. Omiko define two types of interpersonal conflict: “substantive (content based) and emotional (emotion based) conflict” (32). Substantive conflicts or Cognitive Conflicts are “characterized by arguments about facts, information, ideas, or plans” (Collins 52). They can be constructive and produce improved situation and solutions to a problem.

Emotional conflicts or otherwise affective conflicts arise when people are not able to deal constructively with their “frustration, anger, fear, distrust or resentment” (Rout, and Nelson 33). This kind of conflict is person focused and so it may be termed as personalized conflict, which is almost never a good thing. Here the emotion is involved and both the parties work on suspicion and neither is really interested in solving the problem (Bacal, http://conflict911.com/).

Interpersonal conflict involves three stages; Developing conflict stage, Recognizable conflict stage, and Aggressive conflict stage. It is important for the third person mediator or the employer to identify these stages and address them with appropriate interventions.

At the Developing conflict stage, the conflict is not very clear and can elude the ordinary observer. Precautions should be taken to avoid conflict, deepen the relationships deepened and clarify roles, duties and privileges. The second stage is the Recognizable conflict stage where conflict is obvious and conflict behaviours like tension, friction and frequent disagreement are observed. Conflict should be resolved at this stage by means of effective resolution tools like constructive confrontation,
discipline, coaching and negotiation. The third stage is the Aggressive conflict stage which is a very dangerous stage and very difficult to resolve. This is seen in behaviours like verbal abuse, sarcasm, threat and physical assault. Conflict at this stage is highly volatile and must be handled with extreme caution and firmness (Rout, and Nelson 35). The diagram below illustrates the three stages:

- **Developing Conflict**: Conflict Awareness, Latent Conflict
- **Recognizable Conflict**: Frustration, Friction, Tension
- **Aggressive Conflict**: Assault, Threats, Verbal Abuse

(Rout, and Nelson 34)

It is a clear fact that living in a diverse society with so many different backgrounds, perspectives and approaches to life, conflict is part of everyday life. In all human interactions there will be competing interests and perspectives in relation to the same issues. Hence, a society with no conflict will clearly be a utopian concept. The differences in human existence presuppose a conflict. Diversity is human richness but part of the price is conflict at certain times. Life then is itself the cause of conflict. Life will bring people interactions which will in some way bring about conflicts (Thompson, http://www.avenuesconsulting.co.uk/). There are however, certain things in interpersonal relationships which triggers conflict. These may be termed as the causes. Conflict may stem from
Personality's differences can be a strength or weakness in a relationship. They could be the cause of interpersonal conflict. Different personalities produce varied perspectives and expertise in problem solving and decision-making and thus constitute strength to an organization. However, people with different personality, who share very few common traits, can have difficulty of a common agenda. This situation can lead to serious conflict (Collins 73). According to E. L. Rout and N. Omika, conflict occurs in this situation because, persons from different backgrounds, who share different and varied experiences, interpret differently the same facts. The difference in cultures, values and belief patterns could determine the perspectives. Personality clash can also happen because of “differing opinion or belief or because of a dislike of
personal habits.” Disagreement stemming from personality’s differences can become very emotionally charged and take on a moral tone (60).

Richard Magid is of the view that conflict is inevitable, and considers it as a proof of the uniqueness of individuals with distinctive values, opinions and perceptions. He asserts that conflict has five primary causes; Control, Preferences, Beliefs about facts, Values and Relationship (http://www.expressyourselftosuccess.com). Interpersonal conflict can be the result of other causes. Sensitivity or hurt that comes up because of perceived criticism, especially when a person has low self esteem, can lead to conflict. Furthermore, the personality differences give rise to differences in perceptions and values, differences over facts, goals, priorities and methods, the possible consequences being conflict in interpersonal relationships.

Interpersonal Conflicts arise due to interdependence, perceived incompatible goals, scarce resources, interference, personality differences, communication breakdown etc. In our interactions as human beings we cannot escape conflict situations. What is important is to understand the causes of conflict and the manner it escalates and then learn how to resolve conflict to use it to one’s advantage.

The presence of conflict in itself is not necessarily bad. Conflict can be constructive or destructive. Constructive conflict can enhance better decisions and innovative methods and approaches of solving problems (Collins 28). Constructive conflict can actually provoke great creativity and intensity that can foster team spirit (Patrick and David, http://www.itstime.com).

Constructive conflict is Functional and productive. E. L. Rout and N. Omiko understands functional conflict as the creation or resolution of conflict that often leads to constructive problem solving, improvement in
the quality of decisions, stimulation of involvement in the discussion and building group cohesion (13). Functional Conflict opens opportunity and assists creativity.

Conflict can be dysfunctional too. It may be termed as unhealthy or destructive conflict as well. Dysfunctional conflict is an undesirable experience that is to be avoided, since it has serious negative effects, creates difficulties in communication, breaks any relationship and causes tension, anxiety and stress (Rout, and Nelson 14). Dysfunctional conflict hinders individual or group performance, as bitterness, alienation and division increase. The natural fallout of dysfunctional conflict is competition (Collins 30).

Conflict thus is not necessarily damaging. While conflict is perceived primarily as dysfunctional, it can be seen as beneficial to individual and group if it is viewed in a positive perspective (Sharma, http://www.lifepositive.com). In addressing conflict, what is important and crucial is the mode of resolving it. Positive outlook towards conflict will find energy in it.

Undeniably conflict is inherent to human relationships. The presence of it is a sort of a necessary evil. As much as similarities cohere and facilitate order, contrasts and opposites ensure variety and richness of humanity. Therefore, Darby Checketts holds this view:

There is conflict built into the very design of the world and the universe of which it is a part. There are abundant contrasts. There is constant competition between opposing forces. There are countermeasures and counterbalances that humans employ. Life is very much about juggling the effects of opposites: light and darkness, health and sickness, joy and sorrow, prosperity and poverty, good and evil. With each of
these opposite pairs, we seek to accentuate the one and avoid the other. Would the world and our existence in it be simpler and operate more smoothly if there were not such profound opposites? If all were darkness, sickness, sorrow, poverty, and evil, life would simply be without any hope. If all were light, health, joy, prosperity, and goodness, we would live in a state of idle bliss (37).

The call is for harnessing the opposites and turning them into energy. Conflict should be seen as the signal for fusion “of people with diverse ideas, perspectives, and cultures to create a new whole, a new taste sensation, a new rhythm, an unforeseen power that is mutually beneficial” (26).

e. Conflict Resolution

There is always the potency for conflict in human relationships. Conflict is present because of the differences in personality, beliefs, values, culture, gender and age. Conflict must be accepted and an effective mode of resolving should be evolved. We need to manage conflict, which means neither a complete elimination of it nor its reduction or avoidance. In interpersonal relationships, there are different styles of managing conflict. Kathleen Lawman opined that the style that produces the best outcome “is the constructive, pro-social, integrative style, because it not only solves the problem, but also enriches the relationship and improves ones understanding of the point of view of another” (http://kathleenlawman).

There are different approaches to conflict resolution. The mode that an individual chooses is coloured by his experiences, preferences, and values. The key to effective conflict management is to choose the
management style appropriate for the conflict, Kenneth Thomas and Ralph Kilmann has identified five main styles of dealing with conflict, which vary in their degrees of cooperativeness and assertiveness (http://www.kilmann.com/conflict.html).

These two basic dimensions of behaviour define five different modes for responding to conflict situations: Competing, Collaborating, Compromising, Avoiding and Accommodating. We can represent this in the following way:

![Diagram of conflict modes](http://kilmannanddiagnostics.com/interpersonal.html)

A detailed discussion of the various styles will assist to identify the way people usually tend towards when conflict arises. Each one is capable of using all five conflict-handling modes. None can be characterized as having a single style of dealing with conflict. But certain people use some modes better than others and, therefore, tend to rely on those modes more heavily than others, because of temperament or practice.

In the face of conflict, some people become assertive and uncooperative, trying to pursue and safeguard individual’s concerns at the expense of others. This is competing and is defined by T. S. Jones and R.
Brinkert as "working to have your position or interests take priority over the other party's positions or interests" (193). This style of conflict resolution is confrontational and operates from a win-lose mindset. A person who operates with this style is interested in winning the conflict than finding a solution satisfying to both parties in conflict. The style is destructive in as much as it shows a "put-downs" tendency and the parties are engaged in "exchange of insults, verbal abuse, and threats" (Collins 70). This is a power-oriented mode in which you use whatever power seems appropriate to win your own position—your ability to argue, your rank, or economic sanctions. Competing means "standing up for your rights," defending a position which you believe is correct, or simply trying to win (http://www.kilmann.com). It is often aggressive and "shows a high concern for self and a low concern for others" (Jones, and Ross 193). Competing is dominating and power based.

According to E. L. Rout and N. Omika, the techniques employed in competing are; "dominance, authoritative command, and majority rule." They present the lion as the symbol of this style (86). People who adopt this style of managing conflict can be also termed as the Competing Shark. They are highly goal oriented and will not hesitate to use aggressive behaviour even at the cost of relationship breakdown (Johnson, http://webhome.idirect.com).

This style of conflict management is not altogether destructive. Competing would be is effective for someone who wields power and is on the right. Competition would be required in situations when quick decisions are necessary; when implementing unpopular decisions; when vital issues have to be handled; or when safeguarding one's self-interest against others who are trying to exploit the situation. However, over dependence on this style can lessen people's motivation because they are
left out in decision-making (Rout, and Nelson 86-7). This style of conflict resolution could lead to lack of cooperation or feedback from others as the style is aggressive and occurs without much concern for other's opinions (Kelchner, http://www.ehow.com). A competitor may recourse to an "assertive communication" or an "aggressive means" (Jones, and Ross 193) to achieve his goal, while leaving the individuals feeling bruised, unsatisfied, resentful and unwilling to speak and take initiative.

The accommodation style of conflict management "indicates low concern for self and a high concern for others" (192). This mode is low in assertiveness and high in cooperation (Rout, and Nelson 84). The chameleon is a symbol of this mode (85). The Teddy Bear is also a symbol of the accommodators who put emphasis on human relationships (Johnson, http://webhome.idirect.com). Accommodating skills are selfless generosity or charity, obeying another person's order, forgetting personal desires and the ability to yield to another's point of view ("Understanding Conflict," http://www.foundationcoalition.org).

The accommodating style is effective temporarily to ease situation in a "potentially explosive emotional conflict situation," when maintaining harmony and avoiding disruption are especially important, and the conflict is "based primarily on the personalities of the persons involved and cannot be easily resolved." This mode of resolving conflict emphasizes more on the emotional aspects of conflict rather than on the substantive issues (Rout, and Nelson 85).

People who adopt this mode consider harmony between parties before his personal needs and interests. The obliging person is willing to make concessions, to cooperate and give in to others. However, people can be obliging or accommodating with resentment. They can become complainers, play the martyr or give in simply to show how nice they are
Moreover, in the opinion of T. Jones and R. Brinkert, accommodating can shut down opportunities, and cut short relationship building. Also, the person accommodating may experience increased stress, anger, and frustration if important goals related to self have been sacrifices too quickly or if the other party is not mutually accommodating with related matters (192).

Avoiding is unassertive and uncooperative, and the person who employs this style of conflict resolution will pursue neither his own concerns nor those of the others (Thomas, and Ralph, http://www.kilmann.com). The individual would prefer to stay away from conflict, ignore disagreements, and prefer a neutral stance (Rout, and Nelson 84). Avoiding mode of conflict resolution manifests low assertiveness and low cooperation. The skills engaged are the ability to withdraw, ability to sidestep issues, ability to leave things unresolved and a sense of timing. Some people avoid conflict out of fear, since they lack confidence in their management skills ("Understanding Conflict," http://www.foundationcoastal.org). The turtle is the symbol of this mode. Persons who adopt this mode display a passive behaviour creating lose-lose situations (Johnson, http://webhome.idirect.com). Avoidance of conflict is manifested in withdrawal, refusal to participate in the conflict, or denial of the existence of conflict, or claim of the hopelessness of conflict resolution (Collins 68). Some people avoid conflict by postponing it, hiding their feelings, changing the subject or quitting the project (Lesmeister, http://www.ag.ndsu.edu). Here conflicts remain unresolved and can escalate further. Avoidance can intensify conflict, possibly damaging a relationship, and an excessive use of this strategy can signal a lack of commitment in the relationship (Jones, and Ross 192).
Avoiding style is useful when the issue and relationship in conflict are of low importance or one is in lower power situation, so that one can reduce tensions, and buy time (191). It is also appropriate when victory is impossible, or when the controversy is trivial or when someone else is in a better position to solve the problem (Rout, and Nelson 84).

Compromising reflects “flexibility” and a concern for self and others that is moderate (Jones, and Ross 194). According to Kenneth W. Thomas and Ralph H. Kilmann, compromising engages a moderate stance of “assertiveness and cooperativeness.” The purpose of compromising is “to find some expedient, mutually acceptable solution that partially satisfies both parties” (http://www.kilmann.com). Compromising strategy involves making concessions to reach resolution of conflicts. It may be seen as a lose/lose method because it requires a giving and receiving attitude (Rout, and Nelson 85-6). This style of conflict resolution seeks a quick “middle ground” solution (Collins 70), and involves negotiating, assessing value, and making concessions.

The fox is a symbol of this strategy. People who adopt this strategy are concerned about goals and relationships. They are “willing to sacrifice some of their goals while persuading other to give up part of theirs” (Johnson, http://webhome.idirect.com). This mode of conflict resolution is pragmatic and useful in maintaining relationships. However, the mode can result in game playing and remove only the manifest conflict while the latent conflict remains (Rout, and Nelson 86-7). Compromising could result in both parties not really satisfied with the negotiated outcomes, for in the process both parties may have to give up something important. Hence, in the opinion of Sandra D. Collins, “Compromising is often a default strategy that circumvents true problem solving and does not permit parties to realize the benefits of conflict” (71). The strategy operates best
when the parties involved are of equal match, the issue at stake leaves no clear or simple solutions, and there are no time restraints (Johnson, http://webhome.idirect.com).

Collaborating is conflict resolution mode, which refers to strong assertive and cooperative behaviours. The style is driven by the desire to work with others to construct satisfying solutions to a conflict to all involved (Rout, and Nelson 87). This style, as Tricia Jones and Ross Brinkert would opine, “indicates a high concern for both self and other; it can work very well for generating high quality solutions for important issue and relationships. Collaboration both requires and advances a high level of trust between parties” (194). It means digging into an issue to pinpoint the underlying needs and wants of the two individuals. Collaborating between two persons might take the form of exploring a disagreement to learn from each other's insights (Thomas, and Kilmann, http://www.kilmann.com), or trying to find a “creative and innovative win/win solution to problem.” The style can also help build relationships (Collins 70). The skills involved in collaborating are active listening, identifying concerns, non-threatening confrontation and analyzing input (“Understanding Conflict,” http://www.foundationcoalition.org).

E. L. Rout and N. Omika suggests the Dolphin as a symbol of this style (87), whereas, Johnson puts forth the owl as a symbol of Collaboration. People who employ this method consider conflicts as problems to be solved and try to find solutions acceptable to all. They value goals and relationships, and so ensures that both parties get what they desire thereby eliminating the negative feelings (Johnson, http://webhome.idirect.com). The strategy is considered the most effective approach to stimulate new, creative ideas and getting positive
outcomes which assist high productivity and performance. In the opinion of E. L. Rout and Nelson Omiko:

This approach is a strategic choice for conflict handling, (it is important that the other party’s concerns along with one’s own concerns are considered). An individual who uses this style tends to: (a) see conflict as natural, helpful and even leading to a more creative solution if handled properly, (b) exhibit trust in and candour with others, and (c) recognize that when conflict is resolved to the satisfaction of all, commitment to the solution is likely. An individual who uses the collaborating style is often seen as dynamic and evaluated favourably by others (88).

The collaborating style demands more energy and time and may not necessarily the best choice always (Collins 70). This style is most appropriate when the issue in question is too important to compromise, and when both the parties collaborating share equal power to feel candidly free to interact, and there is potential mutual benefit through a win/win approach (Rout, and Nelson 88).

To sum up, it should be noted that no one style should be overused or particularly emphasized upon. Individuals are capable of handling all the five modes. It is important to know one’s habitual response to conflict so that one can be alert to the possibility of taking a different approach and not be a slave to that one approach. The tendency in us is to lean toward one mode and use that in all situations, but being flexible is an important factor to resolving conflict effectively. One has to learn to recognize which mode will be effective in a given situation (Collins 71).

Besides the Thomas-Kilmann mode of conflict resolution, there are other steps and measures. Johnson proposes seven steps to resolve
conflicts; confronting the opposing parties, defining the conflict together, communicating personal positions and feelings, expressing the cooperative intentions, understanding the conflict from the other party's viewpoint, being motivated to negotiate in good faith, and reaching an agreement with the win-win approach (http://webhome.idirect.com).

Clare Albright proposes that in resolving interpersonal conflict, we share negative emotions only in person or on the phone. The whole demeanour in conflict resolution should be guided with an agreeable disposition that seeks to understand, create trust and openness, take responsibility and gain self-control. There is the need of seeing from the other person's point of view as well (http://mentalhealth.about.com).

Conflict simply cannot be avoided. Even though it may seem negative, it is a natural phenomenon in interpersonal relationships. It is neither good nor bad. It can have positive or negative consequences depending on the way it is handled. It is important to develop skills and learn techniques to effectively deal with conflict situations (Rinchart, http://ohioline.osu.edu). The ability to resolve conflict is a highly prized skill. To get into conflict is simple, but to get out of it is a horrendous task. Certain skills and techniques are required to resolve conflicts.

The first thing is to develop an attitude of resolution. The one important thing is to calm oneself and be prepared to respond than to react. A change in mental frame from anger and confrontation to one of calm, inquiry and resolution will be lot more useful. Marilyn Lesmeister believes that to resolve conflict effectively, it is important to accept the fact that conflict is going to happen and then decide upon a positive approach to manage it. An open discussion and dealing with one issue at a time will help manage the conflict better (http://www.ag.ndsu.edu). Another effort for conflict resolution is listening to the emotional aspects of the other, and
then searching together for the cause of conflict. After that the conflicting parties should seek to identify the points of agreement and disagreement (Patrick & David, http://www.itstime.com).

In seeking an effective solution to a conflict, one has to avoid reacting to unintentional remarks, making hasty assumptions, and offering quick-fix resolutions. Both the parties should practice patience, respect each other, build up trust and avoid calling names (Lesmeister, http://www.ag.ndsu.edu). A good conflict resolution effort will try to generate solutions a shared, win-win vision of resolution. Look for the workable solution. Both the conflicting parties must take responsibility for the conflict.

Conflict is a fact and has been with us from time immemorial. It is not always a destructive one. There are positive aspects of conflict. It can provide individuals and groups opportunities to rethink and take more concrete view of the situation. Conflict enables a person to become aware of problems in a relationship. It serves as a catalyst for positive change. It energizes, motivates, and stimulates interest and curiosity. Conflict handled properly can lead to personal and professional growth. However, conflict not resolved can lead to destructive relationship and negative consequences.

Daniel Dana says, “We’ve been resolving conflicts for years...millions of years” (38). But resolving conflict towards a positive outcome does not come naturally. For Daniel Dana there are three ways of resolving conflict: power contests, rights contests and interests reconciliation (41). As for Stephen Covey, since conflict arises due to competition for a scarce resource, he believes that it is necessary to create the “abundance mentality” versus a “scarcity mentality”. He proposes a belief that there are enough natural and human resources to realize my
dreams as well as those of others, and that the success of others does not mean my failure and vice versa (157). The abundance mentality will employ the win/win approach and "the communication principle of seeking first to understand before seeking to be understood." In this mentality, a person is "trusting, open, giving, willing to live and let live, and able to value differences." (158)

Darby Checketts proposes listening as an important factor in conflict resolution and says, "It is a huge fallacy in life to not listen, yet most of us encounter situations in life when we truly think we know it all" (64). He also suggests that listening is a very intelligent act prompting individuals to find solutions rather than winning an argument, and it requires commitment, a commitment to exercise the intelligence to its greatest degree (80). Active listening that is participating in the conversation totally focussed is the most effective method of communication. It will assist understanding of the other and elicit appropriate feedback leading to meaningful dialogue (Weiss 29-31).

Conflict resolution is practiced daily in our life. Gary T. Furlong suggests that people who engage in conflict resolution should follow these two steps; "Step One: Effectively diagnosing a conflict, and Step Two: Taking action to manage the conflict based on the diagnosis" (3-4). Diagnosis of the conflict begins with a theoretical knowledge to discover the root causes, and when they are discovered, efforts are made to resolve the conflict with the help of appropriate models and tools. According to Christopher Moore; "To work effectively on conflicts, the intervener needs a conceptual road map or "conflict map" that details why a conflict is occurring, identifies barriers to settlement, and indicates procedures to manage or resolve the dispute" (58).
Virtually, conflict is often viewed negatively as being destructive, dangerous to relationships, threatens friendships, and is to be avoided. It need not be always destructive. It becomes destructive only, if it is not resolved or managed properly in the initial stage. It can be constructive and beneficial to organizations, in terms of “better decisions and innovative approaches to solving problems” (Collins 28). Taking cue from this it may be affirmed that “conflict is inevitable” and can, even in the very best of relationships. Again, we cannot resolve all the conflicts and so the best will be to manage them as effectively as possible (29).

In everyday life, definitely intrapersonal and interpersonal conflicts are inevitable. The analysis of conflict, considers many factors like the concept, nature, elements, types and causes. All conflicts involve differences of opinion, value, goal, desire, culture, gender, and personality. The differences could lead to disagreements and when they turn severe, they can erupt as conflicts. There is a definite scheme or stages of the development of conflict, which is listed as latent conflict, conflict emergence, conflict escalation, (hurting) stalemate, de-escalation (negotiation), dispute settlement and post-conflict peace-building. Some see the cycle of conflict growth as latent conflict, perceived conflict, felt conflict, manifest conflict and conflict aftermath. The depth of understanding of the dynamics of conflict would ensure the effectiveness of its resolution.

Conflict in itself is neither good nor bad. It is what we do with it that makes the difference. Most people learn a particular style of handling conflict from their childhood and by adulthood function automatically. Some avoid conflict, others treat it as a battle to be won, some seek to accommodate, while others collaborate or compromise. In resolving conflict, communicating openly, frequently, honestly and clearly plays an
important factor. In handling conflict, the constructive mode should be sought, as it can help us learn about others and in the process about self too. For a constructive process of conflict resolution to be effective, the following factors would be needed; strong relationships, collaborative communication, careful planning, active listening, and patience. Since conflict is unavoidable, the whole attempt of conflict resolution should be to make it functional or constructive, to facilitate growth in relationship and foster mutual happiness.
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