Chapter – V

FINDINGS

&

RECOMMENDATIONS
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FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As an outcome of the data analysis and interpretation; following are some of the striking findings of the study –

A. Findings from the Cases
B. Findings from Hypothesis & Data Analysis

5.1 Findings from the Cases

1. Conflict genesis is initially valid at an individual Psychological level, wherein, the conflict is between Individuals, i.e. Employee Vs HR Manager (transactions are at individual level) or between individuals i.e. village youth/parents Vs HR Manager. However, when they do not achieve a resolution, and the conflict moves to the next stage, then there is a tendency to involve a larger group, may be, to get a better bargaining power, and the issue takes on the dimension of a **Sociological Conflict**, wherein the conflict moves to the collective level i.e. Union level or Panchayat level Vs the Company (no longer with HR Manager) and the top Management gets involved. (Case I, II & III)

The experience revealed that this transition in the conflict situation and has applied this aspect in the conflict resolution process, wherein the larger/newer players that have got involved, are also integrated strategically, in the conflict resolution process. This was very evident in “Sons of Soil” issue elaborated in the Case 2.

2. Conflicts with young workers was also related to the **Freudian perspective** of Parent-Child relationship. As the child grows and reaches adulthood, he/she learns to adapt, accept and deal with the hierarchies and organized authorities at public environment such as Schools, colleges and also Industry. He/she tries to achieve a balance of cooperation and Competition with others and establishes a place within his/her peers along with the prime responsibility of being in employment.
The approach to involve the family as elaborated in Case 1, was an attempt to see if the Freudian evolution has transcended out in the individuals or if the parents could still influence the grown up child, who is a young workman. It was evident that the grown up child (employee) was past the parent-child relationship influences and was driven by his professional role in society/industry, wherein his need to balance Cooperation and Competition with peers was evident, as his parents could not prevail over him during the strike situation.

3. In sociological conflicts involving the local community, as in Case 2, the organization has to first of all appreciate the existence of issues and exhibit collaborative and affirmative action’s, which will give confidence to the locals, that there is likely to be a win – win situation. Also, the time factor is very relevant in these cases, as any delay could have an adverse sociological impact, wherein the local community could boycott the organizations and in the case 2, the negative impact could have been even on the new recruits who come to stay in the local village.

4. In organizations, where the need for change is basically due to competition from new industries which are using better automation and lean manpower/manufacturing techniques - top management looks at modernization of infrastructure and manpower rationalization.

HR managers are under pressure from the top management to take a firm, assertive stand and work on an approach of High Concern for Task, as in the Thomas – Kilmann model of conflict behavior. This result in a deadlock situation wherein the workers take an adamant stand due to fear and the situation deteriorates, sometimes going out of control. Such situation also encourages individual level conflicts to get into a collective mode just for the purpose of collective strength.

5. HR Managers are often treated as interface with Unions and asked to manage issues with them without following a systematic strategic planning approach. This puts tremendous pressure and stress on the HR Managers, who see it as their personal target to achieve the plans or directives of the management.
Very often HR managers do not have a significant voice over management decisions and are just expected to implement those decisions. In this process, either the HR managers adopt delaying methods – Avoiding style of Conflict management or get into a negotiation mode, thereby, moving into the Compromising style. In view of this, their effectiveness is far from desired in solving the conflicts. It also spills over in conflicts getting attributed to the failure of the individual HR manager in resolving it. It is seen many times that such Managers leave their jobs and find new jobs. Unfortunately, it is perceived that such a change benefits the organization, as things are viewed by both sides afresh and things move on, just till another major collective issue comes up and again the HR manager gets singled out.

For many conflicts in Organisations that have a scale of Sociological impact, such as in the case 3, owing to the fact that the magnitude of change affected the families and the community in which they were living, in such cases, it is prudent to completely understand their real concerns and take the management into confidence about the need to address those issues before actually expecting the real issues to get resolved. Low hanging fruits, as those peripheral issues can be termed, need to be isolated and worked on and solved in order to create a ground for further positive momentum in the conflict resolution process.

6. It is advisable as evident in case-1, to take the conflict discussions off-site when a situation is sliding toward the destructive path. Few meetings were also organized at the circuit house which were found to be effective.

7. It was observed that, often managements preferred to discuss all issues in a closed room and conclude the issue, then and there. This becomes stressful and often leads to a Compromising mode which is not a very desirable conflict handling mode. However, it has helped to have time-outs in order to regain composure. The need to keep Emotions out of the discussions was also experienced in the case.

8. As evident in the cases, the approach to conflict resolution seems to have its effect of stress on HR managers, however, it was found that with sustained perseverance, transparency, involvement in decisions, professional and fair approach, all in all, ensures
that the Conflict Resolution Process remains issue based, collaborative and thereby, also creates a ground for mutual trust between the conflicting parties.

5.2 Findings from Hypothesis & Data Analysis

1. Even if an individual’s primary dominant style is not ‘Collaborative’; integrating positive attributes like open culture, existence of proper conflict resolution process and other such Integrative processes, helps such individuals to move to more desired style and conflict handling mode which have a balance between concern for self and concern for others, with minimal resistance.

2. Integrating factors such as open culture and conflict resolution process will benefit Effectiveness in organization in terms of innovation, lower attrition rate and better satisfaction of employees.

3. Employees are in a positive frame of mind to accept the decisions taken by the management for a conflict situation, when they are involved in the process rather than by appointing an external consultant. Also, appointing an external consultant creates a feeling of decisions being thrust on employees and creates disagreements.

4. Organizations carrying out brainstorming sessions will benefit in new innovations and improve efficiency and effectiveness of the organizations. It gives an opportunity to an individual to get a feeling of being a part of the problem and its solution. An employee can come up with practical solutions, which may benefit him, as well as the organization.

5. The generally perceived thought that ‘Age’ is a predominant factor in conflict handling process, and it correlates positively with positive outcome of conflicts. However, it was observed that the traditional thought, that ‘Age’ has a bearing on his ability to better manage conflict situations is incorrect as seen from the data collected. Age has nothing to do, neither with presence of conflict nor with handling conflict situations effectively.

6. If the employees are not involved in decisions such as new investments, technological up gradations etc., then it results into disagreements/conflicts and also increases the level of dissatisfaction at work.
5.3 Other Findings

1. Importance and significance of Conflict Management as a Strategy.

1a) In response to the question about the focus of Organisations regarding Training Programs, 69% of respondents responded that Team building Program and 55% responded about Communication skill programs as being the focused and conducted by the organization. Training program on Conflict Management or Conflict handling was not in focus.

1b) 72% of respondents feel that there is no handbook detailing the conflict handling procedure which is made available to each employee.

1c) 52% of respondents said that there are no procedures or guidelines available in their organization regarding Conflict Handling.

Comments:

Training imparted in most organizations is based on the technical skill and knowledge requirements and the other part is the behavioral training. While the technical trainings are easy to assess, the behavioral training needs to be assessed based on certain evaluations of the employees behaviours as assessed by his superiors. Thereby, there is an element of subjectivity in the assessment and it leaves the Training manager to work out appropriate interventions or training modules.

The above responses were significant and validate the situation in the Industry. Based on his personal experience also, it only validates that most of the Training plans and calendars are filled with, apart from the Technical trainings, with soft skills training, communication skills, Team working etc., except in very few organizations where Conflict management is included in the Strategic plan. This is owing to the fact that many organizations at the corporate level, don’t integrate conflict management in their business strategy and thus this important aspects gets marginalized in the day to day strategies. However, the informal and unofficial forums operate in progressive
organizations which foster a culture of open communication and expression of disagreements, without any proper internal conflict management strategy.

2. Multinational Companies are appearing to be progressive and participative management philosophy is evident from the following responses. This is a very favorable trend that has been observed which encourages open communication.

2a) 76% of respondent feel that feedback about organization policies/decision are encouraged in organization.

2b) 66% of respondent feel secure enough (without consequence) to vent their grievance.

2c) 71% of respondent feel that Top Management are open to discuss /consider any change in working strategy.

2d) 75% of respondent feel that decision on Major Business issues are based on discussion with all Top Management.

2e) 72% of respondent agree that Top Managers are encouraged to resolve disputes by free discussion.

2f) 71% respondents agree that a person with grievance is given a fair hearing by the Top Management.

2g) 76% of respondent agree that in official meetings, ideas are discussed freely.

2h) 59% of respondent disagree that raising issues is not a hindrances in promotion/performance evaluation.

2i) 64% respondent agree that brain storming session are held in the Organization to resolve issues

2j) 62% agree that in their organization often debates/conflicts have resulted in constructive changes/improvements.
**Comments:**

It is observed that Progressive Organisations have a very open culture and are encouraging people involvement and supporting open communication. The role of **Open communication** is vital in organization behavior, as miscommunication typically reduces productivity and increases error and waste. Proper communication done in an appropriate manner keeping the sensitivities of employees in mind could result in improved morale and team spirit.

This environment is very evident in professionally managed organizations. As it is seen from our sample population, that comprises of MNCs and/or Pvt. Ltd., companies, which, normally tend to be professionally managed. The above responses vindicates the perception of the researcher and also the general perception that such organizations follow practices which are people centric and are sensitive to allow freedom of expression/communication. However, the institutionalization of such processes is very important.

3. **Perception of employees towards expressing their disagreements at work:**

3a) 70% respondent disagree that they do not hate disagreement/s at work.

3b) 63% of respondent disagree that showing a true feelings in a dispute is a sign of weakness.

3c) 67% agree that in conflict situation they feel comfortable in expressing their thoughts no matters who, the others are involved.

**Comments:**

The above responses indicate that there is a growing tendency in professionally managed organizations for their employees to **feel comfortable** about their **freedom of expression**, and they exercise it at their work place. Such an attitude to express and let your colleagues also express their true feelings and disagreements speaks a lot about the organizational culture that is promoting such freedom and at the same time it also
indicates that employees are more tolerant and open to discuss disagreements. Others point of view has significance in such work environment and will foster better team working. Open communication helps organizations improve continuously. Information is not filtered through several levels of management, but instead it is filtered through fewer levels. It is more direct from the upper levels to the lower levels and vice versa.

There is also a link between Organisational communication & Perception of Justice. In a research study “The Role of the Organizational Communication on Employees’ Perception of Justice: A Sample of Public Institution from Turkey, by Mr. Mehmet Ince & Mr. Hasan Gül of Karamanoğlu Mehmetbey University, Turkey (European Journal of Social Sciences – Volume 21, Number 1 (2011). (66)

This study reveals and concludes that when employees perceive organizational decisions and activities fair, it leads their trust to increase towards their manager. Concordantly, employees’ perceptions whether it is fair or not participating to decisions, performance evaluation, allocation of organizational resources and rewards like wage and promotions and procedures that play role on operation of these is very important for managers in communication with them. It is clear that process of procedural informing and effective and fair distribution of resources is needed to create a positive employee perception for organization and results of the research is supporting it. Creating positive employee perception like executive policies are fair is only possible with managing organizational communication and information flow effectively and in a healthy way. Managers’ fair decisions and applications generally are not enough for employees’ positive justice perceptions. It definitely should be supported by an effective communication and sharing process. In this context, organization managers have important responsibilities to create a structure that help to spread sharing of organizational information among employees.

5.4 Recommendations

1. As evident in the analysis, there is a Dominant conflict handling mode and a Secondary dominant mode. Employees tend to move to favorable mode which will exhibit equal concern for self and concern for others, only when there are integrating factors such as open communication, conflict resolution process etc.. It is recommended that such integrative process is formalized in organizations and employees should be
made aware of these. Formal & informal internal communication plays a very important role.

2. Conflict situations do have its share of creating stress in employees, particularly those who need to manage them. Organizations should make sure that the Managers who are managing the conflicts are backed up and regular feedback is taken from those managers to get periodic updates. Accordingly, such internal review mechanism will encourage the managers to take appropriate steps and also plan their actions which will have the full backing of their bosses.

3. In situations where conflicts move from Individual level to collective level and then to a sociological level, the Managers should be able to anticipate such transitions. This needs to be factored in the conflict resolution process planning, wherein the larger/newer players that have got involved, are also integrated in the conflict resolution process and are also addressed. Multi channel communication is vital is addressing and creating awareness of the core issues and suggested options to all the parties involved. This would ensure unity of thought and action from both sides.

4. Many times, it is considered a good strategy to involve the family members during any conflict with individual employees or collective association of employees. However, this seemed to have little or no impact on the employees. It could be a good strategy to create awareness in the community about the status and real issues, just from a good will perspective; however, such actions will not directly impact the conflict resolution process.

5. Brainstorming is good tool for improving and encouraging employee involvement. This nurtures creativity and encourages an innovative approach to resolve issues. Moreover, employees feel part of the resolution process and hence it creates a conducive environment.

6. External consultants are perceived as outsiders by employees and are seen as management supporters. There is often suspicion and such decisions to involve external consultants should be well integrated and communicated to the employees. Further, teams could be formed with external consultants and internal employees who can be
mandated to resolve issues. This will have better acceptance and support from employees. Further, the employees will not feel that solutions have been thrust on them. The solution will be an **evolutionary process** from within the group.

7. Since **age seems to have no correlation** with the ability of the person to manage conflicts effectively, it is vital to keep this factor in mind while constituting teams to manage any issue. It may still be prudent to have a **demographic mix**, from a mere perception viewpoint.

8. During conflict situations that have a sociological impact and magnitude, **creating good will with community** is important. Further, when there are issues which are complex such as the taxation impact in the case-3 VRS issue, it is necessary from time to time to involve external facilitators such as counselors to address the issues and give an understanding of the proposed solutions and its impact on the employees. This will build trust and confidence and the conflict handling mode will move into the **Collaborative mode** which is the most desirable mode for **win-win solutions**. It is important to note that external facilitators are not to be confused with external consultants. Facilitators are counselors who work with the employees in only clarifying the management proposals and do not get involved in the solutions.

9. Since it is important to not isolate the HR manager and make him the sole representative of the company to face the Union, the **composition of team** is very critical. To be effective, teams should be such that all **members bring unique competence** to the table. Besides saving resources by not having unnecessary people on the team, such effective teams foster trust among the team members because they all bring their own skills and are dependent on the other team members at the same time.

   For conflicts to stay constructive, it is important that it is seen as a **business/work context issue rather than personalizing it**, because, whatever the conflicting parties feel toward each other, the focus should stay on the task and not on the people.

10. Collaborative conflict handling mode, although is most desirable, but is a road not often preferred, as it can be long, and requires some skill and effort. Collaboration is about assuming positive intent and seeing things **holistically** from all sides. It is about
acknowledging and accepting differences, and exploring alternative solutions that meet everyone's needs and concerns. It is a useful conflict management strategy when the issues are important to everyone, and all sides need to be committed to the solution.

**Conflict Management Framework:**

The conflict process often starts out as a constructive process, but because organizations often lack the formal defined processes for conflict management, they easily fall into the destructive path. Rather than focusing on the task and reaching as a good a result as possible, it becomes a blame game between the conflicting parties. It may even come to a point where the actual reason the conflict occurred in the first place is forgotten. What becomes the ultimate goal is for participants to “win the conflict”. In order to avoid getting into such situation, the following framework based & adapted from Thomas-Kilmann model, could be used as a basic guideline in managing conflict situations:

The **Competing Style** is highly assertive with minimal cooperativeness; the goal is to win. The Competing style is used when a person has to take quick action, make unpopular decisions, handle vital issues, or when one needs protection in a situation where noncompetitive behavior can be exploited.

Overuse of this style can lead to lack of feedback, reduced learning, and low empowerment. This can result in being surrounded by “Yes-Men”. Overuse of this style can be exhibited through constant tension or anger and occasional outbursts of violent temper.

The **Collaborating Style** is when the concern is to satisfy both sides. It is highly assertive and highly cooperative; the goal is to find a “win/win” solution. Appropriate uses for the Collaborating style include integrating solutions, learning, merging perspectives, gaining commitment, and improving relationships. Using this style can support open discussion of issues, task proficiency, equal distribution of work amongst the team members, better brainstorming, and development of creative problem solving. This style is appropriate to use frequently in a team environment. Collaborating skills include the ability to use active or effective listening, confront situations in a non-threatening way, analyse input, and identify underlying concerns.
Overuse of the Collaborating style can lead to spending too much time on trivial matters, diffusion of responsibility, being taken advantage of, and being overloaded with work.

The **Compromising Style** is finding a middle ground. This style is moderately assertive and moderately cooperative; the goal is to find middle ground. The Compromising style is used with issues of moderate importance, when both parties are equally powerful and equally committed to opposing views. This style produces temporary solutions and is appropriate when time is a concern, and as a backup for the Competing and Collaborating styles when they are unsuccessful in resolving the situation.

Overuse of the Compromising style leads to loss of long-term goals and being viewed as having no firm values. Overuse of compromise can result in making concessions to keep people happy without resolving the original conflict.

The **Avoiding Style** is low assertiveness and low cooperativeness. The goal is to delay. It is appropriate to use this style when there are issues of low importance, to reduce tensions, or to buy time.

The **Accommodating Style** is, foregoing ones concerns in order to satisfy the concerns of others. This style is low assertiveness and high cooperativeness; the goal is to yield. The Accommodating style is appropriate to use in situations when you want to show that you are reasonable, develop performance, create good will, keep peace, retreat, or for issues of low importance. Accommodating skills include the ability to sacrifice, the ability to be selfless, the ability to obey orders, and the ability to yield.

Overuse of the Accommodating style results in ideas getting little attention, restricted influence, loss of contribution, and anarchy.

**Application of the Styles & Conclusion**

Managers need to know about the conflict styles and be aware of their personal preferences of their dominant style. The goal is to develop skills in all of the styles so that one can mold conflict into a constructive form. Conflict can be used to help expose
important issues, develop learning and creativity, and can help to develop trust and openness (Brake & Walker, 1995).

Different authors & studies such as Thomas K. W. 1976. Conflict and Conflict Management in the Handbook of Industrial and Organizational Psychology & also Blake R. R., and J. S. Mouton 1964 in the Managerial Grid, have spoken about various approaches to Conflict management. The researcher feels that besides these and the five typical approaches based on Thomas Kilmann model, which have been studied in this research, it is important that Managers who are representatives of the Management, by using their experience, have to constantly develop the ability to keep their Conflict Management Style versatile and use the appropriate style based on the context. In short, the approach & style should be **Situational**.

The challenge of the contemporary organization is also to encourage the use of the Collaborating problem solving style of handling conflicts. Employees should also be trained not to engage in win–lose or bargaining style of handling conflict which falls into the Compromising mode. This can be done by strengthening the integrating conflict-management style and discouraging the use of an Avoiding style. To attain this goal, training in conflict management of all Managers is essential.

**Scope for Further Research**

This study has brought the non conventional approach to conflict handling and hence model could be developed and validated. Education and education pattern with additional course offering management certifications such as MBA, PGDBM etc., aspirations of technical graduates to equip themselves with managerial grade and its impact on approach to handling conflict will add to the body of knowledge. It may be interesting to assess the approach of employees in managing conflicts, upgraded through rank and file compared to employees hired from various business schools that have academic inputs but with comparatively less practical exposure. This can also add to the body of knowledge on curriculum and Training module strategy.

The researcher has focused on Conflict management and Intergroup behaviour in Manufacturing Companies of India, primarily with the focus on Western India, although,
the data was collected from few manufacturing organisations in north and south of India also. Therefore there is scope for validating the findings in the organizations from other regions as well and also to examine and explore the impact and influence of regional culture on the topic.

Conflict Management and intergroup behaviour are based on situational compulsions and hence it may be relevant to validate the relevance of time and context of conflict situations and the person’s approach to handling the conflict.

Demographic mix on conflict, expectations of the organizations, Competency Gap – Desired and Actual, educational institutes partnering educational program in line with the requirement of the organization and its impact on organizational effectiveness and conflict management can add dimensions to the subject.

It can also be explored from the Organisational Communication aspect, if there is any correlation with Conflict management.