CHAPTER 7
REVISITING LINE AND STAFF FUNCTIONS IN ORGANIZATIONS INSPIRED BY HUMAN BODY[7.1*]

7.1 Introduction

Achievement of organizational goals and objectives primarily depends on top management commitment and their coordination with rest of the organization. In this regard, differences in line and staff function are one of the most important concerns to be addressed in organizations. Therefore, business managers need to adopt new paradigms to address the challenges arising out of evolving differences between various groups. As discussed, the inspiration to overcome various organizational challenges is around us in the form of Nature. In this respect, human body, the Nature's perfect creation has been visualized as an organization which is far away from any internal conflicts. According to Witzel [379], in human body, "*the Great Designer has arranged the parts and arranged the relationship between them that through proper coordination of functions and parts there would be control of the body as a whole, or control of certain parts of the body performing the same major functions*". Furthermore, according to Knoeppel [187], the concept of line and staff organization can be visualized in human body organization in following way:

In human body line members include, the involuntary organs like - stomach, heart, liver, kidney and the voluntary organs like - arms, fingers, legs and feet. The staff organization of human body has the five senses - taste, touch, smell, hearing and sight. These five senses provide inputs to line members for action through the brain who decides what to do or not.

However, in human body, the line and staff members are working in an integrated manner without disputes. The next question that would automatically come is what strategies made human body free from such disputes. In fact understanding the

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principles and processes that eliminate conflict in human body can perhaps help managers in analyzing and understanding the reasons behind line and staff function conflict in organizations. With this in mind, this chapter is aimed to identify the variables contributing to line and staff function conflict in organizations; based on which a generally applicable framework that establishes relationships between these variables is developed. It is expected that by comparing the proposed framework of line and staff function in human body, the real cause of the problem could be understood. It is also expected that, based on this comparison, some ways for resolving conflict within organizations can be suggested, which in turn will probably help organizations in achieving their set goals and objectives.

7.2 Reviewing line and staff function in human body

Some researchers have compared business organization to living systems. Knoeppel [186], uses biological metaphor to explain how organizations work. According to him, similar to a business organization - *"the principal aim of the human body is economy in the expenditure of bodily power and energy required to secure the attainment of efficient results in the form of action and accomplishments."* Furthermore, Knoeppel [186] shows how coordination among key elements of the body – the brain (as guide and controller), senses (as expert acquirers and processors of information), and other organs and limbs (as performers of functional tasks) – results in entire body being harnessed to achieve its goals [379]. This is analogous to line and staff activities of business organizations.

In organizational sense, line activities are those that contribute most directly to the accomplishment of the organization's primary objective. Others that serve in an auxiliary and facilitative role in relation to line and operating units or executives are staff activities. Types of staff are personal or assistant, general, specialized, and service. Knoeppel [186], has gone at length and explained line and staff members, organized in human body as: line members, *the karmendriya (or organs of action)* includes: the involuntary organs like - stomach, heart, liver, kidney and the voluntary organs like - arms, fingers, legs and feet. The staff organization, *the gyanendriya (organs of cognition)* of human body includes the five senses - taste, touch, smell, hearing and sight. These five senses provide advisory inputs to the line members for action through the brain which decides what to do or not. Key points of observation are:

i. **Division of Action:** composed of voluntary and involuntary organs – as the *line function*.

a. **Organs of achievement:** are composed of organs such as arms, hands, fingers, legs and feet – the organs with which we actually accomplish things. Their work is voluntary in nature; require individual initiative and judgment in making decisions.

b. **Organs of growth and upkeep/ maintenance (Routine actions):** are composed of organs such as stomach, heart, liver, kidneys and the like – perform functions which enable the line to properly do its work. Their works is quite repetitive and does not involve individual judgment and therefore are involuntary in nature.

ii. **Division of support:** is composed of the five senses – taste, touch, smell, hearing and sight – as the *staff organization*, the advisors to the brain, which tell the brain what to do or not to do. These organs provide inputs to above division for accomplishing tasks.

iii. **Division of Control:** links up the action of routine division with the support division. Relation between these divisions is established through a wonderful mechanism, the nervous system (including brain). Brain serves as the chief executive of this division (guiding factor or leader), where thought, judgment, reason, sense, cognition and violation are centered.

7.3 Brief overview of line-staff conflict in business organizations

Line members are the actual doers and contribute directly to profitability of the organization. However, it is practically infeasible for the line members to perform all functions. Here the need for staff organization arises. According to Hodgetts [162], as organization acquire higher complexity, line personnel alone turn out to be insufficient, and as a result, staff relationship are formed to deal with growing demands of complexity; for example, lawyers are employed to provide legal services to line managers. It also provides management with specialized expertise in area not directly related to the primary function of the organization [373]. Also, mutual support between the line and the staff influences the efficient and beneficial realization of the organization's objectives Vasconcellos [350]. However, Hodgetts [162] explains that when there are two or more groups in the organization, there exists the likelihood of conflict. In fact, it is very common for line and staff workers to come

into conflict. Many times attainment of goals is hindered by relational gaps between the two groups.

Trends in management literature on one side focus on the usefulness of the staff-and-line concept and on other side address the stress arising between them because of perceived ambiguity in defining their functions and responsibilities [234]. Haimann and Hilgert [148] have demonstrated that many of the routine complexities and frictions encountered in an organization are due to line and staff problems. Blau and Scott [44] reviewing Dalton [89] study, identified line and staff conflicts among the various conflicts in complex organizations. Staff specialists say line workers avoid and ignore them, and line workers say staff workers lack expertise in the organization's core work, distract them, and get in their way. Other management theorists have observed that line managers sometimes resent staff advisors for being younger and better-educated than they are. Others attribute the problem to staff managers for not realizing that even though they have been delegated authority in particular area, their primary role is to serve and support line managers.

Thus because of various misconceptions, distrust, conflict of personalities, disunity and duplication of effort arising from line and staff conflict, the efficiency of organization is adversely affected. Dalton [89] in his classical study of line-staff conflict demonstrates that because of power struggle in line and staff relations the process of adjustment to changes in organization has become complex. American organizational sociologist Melville Dalton attributed this to "the conspicuous ambition and individualistic behavior among staff managers," staff's anxiety to justify their existence, and the dependence of highly ranked staff managers on line managers [89]. So at this point of time it is very important to examine the possible reasons of conflict and resolve them.

7.4 Identification of possible reasons of line-staff conflict

Research in many industrial plants has shown that the conflict between managerial staff and line group hinders the attainment of organizational goals. The struggle between line and staff organization were attributable to many reasons. It includes functional differences between the two groups, difference in ages, formal education, potential occupational ceilings, status group affiliations of members of the two groups, and need of the staff groups to justify their existence [89]. Nevertheless, based

on review of literature major reasons possibly leading to line staff conflict are summarized as follows:

7.4.1 Imbalance in distribution of authority

The organizational behavior literature suggests that the power structure of organizations serves as potential cause of line-staff conflict [5]. According to Mumby [228], one group is represented on the upper position of the hierarchy with relevant authority. Wilkenfield [373] says that mostly contribution of line management is considered more important for profitability and hence they are better represented within the hierarchy and responsibility to make decisions affecting profits are delegated to them. Whereas, those who occupy staff positions, merely advice and support line managers. Such imbalance in structural and power arrangements perhaps contribute to line to staff differences [53].

7.4.2 Lack of Moderator or Judicial Body

Mostly, initiatives originated by staff members are considered with some reluctance by the line member, who considers them as- an interference with their authority and addition to cost, which may negatively influence efficiency of operations. Such attitude is probably because of absence of a moderator or judicial body coordinating their work to complement each other and clearly demarcating their roles and authority.

7.4.3 Role ambiguity

According to Wilkenfield [373], the structure of an organization also creates misunderstanding among line and staff members regarding their roles, responsibilities and relative value to the corporation. This is due to ambiguous roles assigned to staff function and also due to uncertainty about the full depth and applicability of the disciplines involved in the staff function.

7.4.4 Lack of consensus

Degree of consensus between line and staff members is positively related to coordination and cooperation in policy implementation, which in turn affects firm's performance [181]. According to Bowen and Ostroff [51], a consensus between staff and line managers is more likely to result in employees sharing a common interpretation of organizational expectations which may lead to higher employee and firm performance. However, in reality, line managers question staff member's contribution to the firm's performance which results in line managers' unwillingness to collaborate with staff managers in strategic implementation [68].

7.4.5 Underestimation of staff function by the line

Another reason for perceptual disputes can be line managers' low expectations about staff effectiveness. Line managers regard staff members as merely an administrative personnel function and hence have limited expectations about their effectiveness [68].

7.4.6 Elimination of staff function

Line and staff functions are inherently different in priority. If a line function fails, the primary operation of the business is threatened. Whereas, if a staff function fails, there is usually a work-around that provides a reasonable alternative. Considering this fact, line executives believe that the staff groups can be replaced by lower-line officers [89]. In fact, some of the staff functions are already integrated with line functions or replaced by other function. According to Wilkenfield [373] the reasons of this are:

1). the routine business activities can continue without staff,

2). staff functions are not in the mainstream of the corporation, and

3). the effectiveness of staff contribution can't be measured in terms of productivity and profitability.

7.4.7 Lack of long term career paths for staff function

Methods of recognizing growth and contribution of staff members may be missing in the organization. Common methods like pay proportionate with responsibility, title presenting organizational status and career paths that include opportunities to move outside the current responsibilities may not made for staff members Wilkenfield [373]. This ignores the importance of staff function in the organization, which in turn may result in conflict between the discontented staff members and hyped line members.

7.4.8 Conflict of interests

The line managers are in charge of the actual carrying out of organizational assignments and production of goods. Therefore, they are granted managerial authority which enables them to take important decisions. On the other hand, various professional experts (staff members) are active in organizations by virtue of their expertise and professional authority, which enables them to suggest improvements to line managers. In this way, both line-staff personals tend to extend their authority and trespass into each others' territory that results in conflict between them. For example, staff managers try to disseminate instructions, rules of conduct, and work regulations

approved by top management. Whereas, line managers take various measures to prevent staff personnel intruding into their sphere of responsibility and try to keep them out of their territory [284].

7.4.9 Different personality by virtue of position

Despite common perceptions about the differences between line and staff personnel, some studies conducted in one of the fastest growing, highly service-oriented retail organizations in the United States have suggested that staff personnel were more modest while line managers; though were more service-oriented, open to new ideas, demonstrated respect and adaptability to change but were significantly weaker at relationships [75]. In another similar study, Church and Waclawski [75] observed staff personnel to be more fair and consistent in their dealings with people, accepted and encouraged feedback from others and were flexible as well as adaptive in their roles.

7.4.10 Overbearing attitude

Staff members' acts in advisory capacity and are not accountable for the result derived from the advice given. This causes resentment from the line manager which is increased when the staff manager behaves with line managers as if he is an expert. Besides, line management considers that staff managers do not have much operational experience and may not appreciate their suggestions (of which staff manger may be sure because of its specialization) [90]. Such overbearing attitude of both functions removes cooperation and acceptance for each other and produces conflict.

7.4.11 Competition for resources

Struggle for resources is another factor contributing to line and staff differences [188, 374, 53]. These resources could be tangible or intangible. According to Kramer [188], tangible resources are factors like physical space, information, fiscal resources etc. while intangible resources include status and recognition. Kramer [188] also suggests that both groups overestimate their 'entitlement' for resources and consider itself as 'under benefited'. Such perceptions lead to competition between the line and staff people.

7.4.12 Functional categorization

The existence of line and staff as separate functions also institutionalizes conflict in organizations. Such categorization leads to group delineations and stereotyping that are often linked to notions of 'common enemy' and 'common threat' [5, 174, 268]. As the group members perceive other group an external enemy to the group their internal

cohesion increases. Also as the group builds cohesion, negative stereotyping of the perceived threat increases. In this way, the phenomenon becomes hardened into a form of culture that substantiates line-staff differences [374].

7.4.13 Stability of tenure of a function

Since line managers contribute directly to the profitability of the organization and are necessarily placed in the hierarchy, their tenure with the organization is relatively permanent in nature. While the tenure of staff managers can vary from short to long as their contribution is more supportive in nature that can be acquired on need basis.

7.4.14 Design of reporting & control systems

According to Alderfer [5], the structure of organization serves as potential cause of line-staff conflict. In this respect, an important structural arrangement that may lead to conflict is 'network centrality'. There are certain positions in the organization that are in the work flow processes. And as, these positions make other parts of the organization dependent upon them and thus become functionally indispensable. This shows that the group with the most integrated and interconnected position is the group which possesses the most network related power. Moreover, in most reporting structures line members' are in-charge of operational responsibility and bears most network related power. This leads to imbalance in power distribution which becomes cause a of line-staff conflict.

7.4.15 Ambiguity in relative status

Relative status of line and staff function in organization is still quite unclear. There are differing views about the importance of line and staff functions in the organization. According to some researchers, direct contribution of line members to the profitability of the organization makes them prominent people and indispensable to the organization [146]. Conversely, others suggest that the staff people are experts in their area and line managers will not be able to achieve goals without their support. Thus we need to examine how human body organization resolves this conflict so that it can provide lessons to be learnt to prevent conflict in corporate body.

7.5 Research methodology

7.5.1 Objectives

A careful review of literature shows that the variables that cause line and staff function conflict are very well described. The influence of each variable in driving conflict is examined independently. But, it is difficult for the policy makers to provide

any solution merely based on this information. This motivates us to analyze the holistic affect of these variables on the issue. Moreover, literature also reveals that the human body organization is comprised of organs that function as its line and staff members. However it is far away from any disputes between its line and staff members. Considering this information, the main objectives of the chapter are:

a. To develop a framework to demonstrate the interplay of different variables holistically in driving line and staff conflict. ***ISM methodology*** is used to develop the model and identify the crucial factors in an orderly manner.
b. To draw some insights inspired by human body organization that can be useful in managing line and staff conflict in business organizations.

7.5.2 Technique used: Interpretive Structural Modeling (ISM)

When all the variables are considered independently to understand the issue, they seem equally important and it becomes difficult to have a clear and holistic view of the problem. However, by developing direct and indirect relationships and by imposing order between the variables, the situation can be described in a better way. This will help in understanding the influence of various variables on each other and on the problem at hand. Furthermore, the next step is to visualize the similar variables in the context of human body organization to understand their relationship and interplay in preventing line and staff conflict. It is expected that by applying similar order in the business situation, line-staff differences can be reduced.

Hence, it necessitates discovering a methodology that can help in identifying a structure within a system, with which the problem can be articulated in a clear fashion. Interpretive structural modeling (ISM) is such a methodology. With this technique, the overall structure is portrayed in the form of a directed graph or digraph [296]. The various steps in this technique are as follows:

Step 1: Identifying enablers or variables related to the issue - Variables causing line and staff conflict, are identified and discussed in literature review section of the chapter. Table 7.1 lists the variables in hand.

Table 7.1: Variables causing line and staff conflict in business organizations

S. No.	Variables	Abbreviation	Element Code
1	Imbalance in distribution of authority	IDA	E1
2	Lack of moderator or judicial body	LMJB	E2
3	Role ambiguity	RA	E3
4	Lack of consensus	LOC	E4
5	Underestimation of staff function by the line	USFL	E5
6	Elimination of staff function	ESF	E6
7	Lack of long term career paths for staff function	LLCPSF	E7
8	Conflict of interests	COI	E8
9	Different personality by virtue of position	DP	E9
10	Overbearing attitude	OA	E10
11	Competition for resources	CFR	E11
12	Functional categorization	FC	E12
13	Stability of tenure of functions	STF	E13
14	Design of reporting & control systems	DR&CS	E14
15	Ambiguity in relative status	AS	E15

Step 2: Developing Structural Self-Interaction Matrix (SSIM) - For analyzing the influence of these variables in driving line and staff conflict, a contextual relationship is established through expert panel opinion and discussion sessions held with them. Such contextual relationship is depicted by the four symbols - V, A, X and O in SSIM as shown in the Figure 7.2.

Table 7.2: Structural self-interaction matrix (SSIM)

i → / ↓ j	15	14	13	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2
1	V	A	V	A	V	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	A
2	V	A	O	O	V	O	O	V	O	O	V	V	V	
3	O	A	O	A	V	O	O	V	O	O	O	O		
4	X	O	O	A	O	A	A	A	O	O	O			
5	O	A	O	A	O	A	A	A	O	V				
6	O	O	O	O	O	A	O	O	X					
7	A	A	X	O	O	O	O	O						
8	A	A	O	A	V	V	V							
9	O	O	O	A	V	V								
10	X	O	O	A	V									
11	A	A	O	A										
12	V	A	X											
13	O	X												
14	V													

The following statements explain the use of symbols V, A, X and O in SSIM (refer Table 7.2):

i. Imbalance in distribution of authority (1) leads to ambiguity in status (15); hence V is assigned to the cell at intersection of imbalance in distribution of authority row and ambiguity in relative status column.

ii. Imbalance in distribution of authority (1) is caused because of improper design of reporting & control systems (14); hence A is assigned in the cell at the intersection of design of reporting & control systems row and imbalance in distribution of authority column.

iii. Also as per the experts opinion imbalance in distribution of authority (1) and overbearing attitude (10) are unrelated; therefore O is assigned to cell at interaction of row of imbalance in distribution of authority and overbearing attitude column.

iv. Similarly, lack of consensus among line and staff members (4) is due to ambiguity in status (15), and ambiguity in relative status leads to lack of consensus among line and staff members, therefore X is assigned in the cell at the intersection of lack of consensus row and ambiguity in status column.

Step 3: Developing Final Reachability Matrix (FRM) - The SSIM matrix is transformed into initial reachabilty matrix by converting the information in each entry of the SSIM into 1s and 0s in the initial reachability matrix as shown in Table 7.3.

Table 7.3: Initial reachability matrix

Elements	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	1
2	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	1
3	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
4	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
5	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
6	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
7	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
8	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0
9	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0
10	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	1
11	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
12	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1
13	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0
14	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	1
15	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	1

1* entries are included to incorporate transitivity to fill the gap, if any, in the opinion collected during development of SSIM. After incorporating the transitivity, the final reachability matrix is obtained in Table 7.4.

Table 7.4: Final reachability matrix

Elements	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
1	1	0	0	1*	0	0	1*	1*	0	1*	1	1*	1	1*	1
2	1	1	1	1	1	1*	1*	1	1*	1*	1	1*	1*	1	1
3	0	0	1	1*	1*	0	0	1	1*	1*	1	0	0	0	0
4	0	0	0	1	0	0	1*	1*	0	1*	1*	0	0	0	1
5	0	0	0	0	1	1	1*	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
6	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1*	0	0
7	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	1*	1	1*	0
8	0	0	0	1	1	1*	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0
9	0	0	0	1	1	1*	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0
10	0	0	0	1	1	1	1*	1*	1	1	1	0	0	0	1
11	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
12	1	0	1	1	1	1*	1*	1	1	1	1	1	1	1*	1
13	1*	0	1*	1*	1*	1*	1	1*	1*	1*	1*	1	1	1	0
14	1	0	1	1*	1	1*	1	1	1*	1*	1	1	1	1	1
15	0	0	0	1	1*	1*	1	1	1*	1	1	0	1*	0	1

Note: * indicates transitive relationships

Step 4: Partitioning the reachability matrix - The final reachability matrix is then partitioned into different levels after deriving the reachability sets and antecedent sets. These levels help in building the digraph and final ISM model. Table 7.5 shows the variables with their reachabilty set, antecedent set, interaction set and the partitioned levels.

While partitioning the final reachability matrix, the variable 6 (Elimination of staff function), 7 (Lack of long term career path for staff function) and 11 (Competition for Resources) are found at level I. Thus, they shall be positioned at the top of the hierarchy of the ISM model. After removing 6th, 7th and 11th element, we have 4th and 5th variable (Lack of consensus and underestimation of staff function by the line), as level II. In this way the entire process is completed in nine iterations and nine levels have been identified as shown in Table 7.6:

Table 7.5: Partitioning the reachability matrix

Iterations	Elements	Reachability Set	Antecedent Set	Intersection	Level
	1	1, 4, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15	1, 2, 12, 13, 14	1, 12, 13, 14	
	2	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15	2	2	
	3	3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 10, 11	2, 3, 12, 13, 14	3	
	4	4, 7, 8, 10, 11, 15	1, 2, 3, 4, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15	4, 8, 10, 15	
	5	5, 6, 7	2, 3, 5, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15	5	
	6	6, 7, 13	2, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15	6, 7, 13	I
	7	6, 7, 12, 13, 14	1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15	6, 7, 12, 13, 14	I
Iteration I	**8**	4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11	1, 2, 3, 4, 8, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15	4, 8, 10	
	9	4, 5, 6, 9, 10, 11	2, 3, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15	9. 10	
	10	4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 15	1, 2, 3, 4, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15	4, 8, 9, 10, 15	
	11	11	1, 2, 3, 4, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15	11	I
	12	1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15	1, 2, 7, 12, 13, 14	1, 7, 12, 13, 14	
	13	1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14	1, 2, 6, 7, 12, 13, 14, 15	1, 6, 7, 12, 13, 14	
	14	1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15	1, 2, 7, 12, 13, 14	1, 4, 7, 12, 13, 14	
	15	4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 15	1, 2, 4, 10, 12, 14, 15	4, 10, 15	
	1	1, 4, 8, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15	1, 2, 12, 13, 14	1, 12, 13, 14	
	2	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15	2	2	
	3	3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 10	2, 3, 12, 13, 14	3	
	4	4, 8, 10, 15	1, 2, 3, 4, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15	4, 8, 10, 15	II
	5	5	2, 3, 5, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15	5	II
Iteration II	**8**	4, 5, 8, 9, 10	1, 2, 3, 4, 8, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15	4, 8, 10	
	9	4, 5, 9, 10	2, 3, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15	9. 10	
	10	4, 5, 8, 9, 10, 15	1, 2, 3, 4, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15	4, 8, 9, 10, 15	
	12	1, 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15	1, 2, 12, 13, 14	1, 12, 13, 14	
	13	1, 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14	1, 2, 12, 13, 14, 15	1, 12, 13, 14	
	14	1, 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15	1, 2, 12, 13, 14	1, 12, 13, 14	
	15	4, 5, 8, 9, 10, 13, 15	1, 2, 4, 10, 12, 14, 15	4, 10, 15	
	1	1, 8, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15	1, 2, 12, 13, 14	1, 12, 13, 14	
	2	1, 2, 3, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15	2	2	
	3	3, 8, 9, 10	2, 3, 12, 13, 14	3	
	8	8, 9, 10	1, 2, 3, 8, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15	8, 10	
Iteration III	**9**	9, 10	2, 3, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15	9, 10	III
	10	8, 9, 10, 15	1, 2, 3, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15	8, 9, 10, 15	III
	12	1, 3, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15	1, 2, 12, 13, 14	1, 12, 13, 14	
	13	1, 3, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14	1, 2, 12, 13, 14, 15	1, 12, 13, 14	
	14	1, 3, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15	1, 2, 12, 13, 14	1, 12, 13, 14	
	15	8, 9, 10, 13, 15	1, 2, 10, 12, 14, 15	10, 15	
	1	1, 8, 12, 13, 14, 15	1, 2, 12, 13, 14	1, 12, 13, 14	
	2	1, 2, 3, 8, 12, 13, 14, 15	2	2	
	3	3, 8	2, 3, 12, 13, 14	3	
Iteration IV	**8**	8	1, 2, 3, 8, 12, 13, 14, 15	8	IV
	12	1, 3, 8, 12, 13, 14, 15	1, 2, 12, 13, 14	1, 12, 13, 14	
	13	1, 3, 8, 12, 13, 14	1, 2, 12, 13, 14, 15	1, 12, 13, 14	
	14	1, 3, 8, 12, 13, 14, 15	1, 2, 12, 13, 14	1, 12, 13, 14	
	15	8, 13, 15	1, 2, 12, 14, 15	15	
	1	1, 12, 13, 14, 15	1, 2, 12, 13, 14	1, 12, 13, 14	
	2	1, 2, 3, 12, 13, 14, 15	2	2	
	3	3	2, 3, 12, 13, 14	3	V
Iteration V	**12**	1, 3, 12, 13, 14, 15	1, 2, 12, 13, 14	1, 12, 13, 14	
	13	1, 3, 12, 13, 14	1, 2, 12, 13, 14, 15	1, 12, 13, 14	
	14	1, 3, 12, 13, 14, 15	1, 2, 12, 13, 14	1, 12, 13, 14	
	15	13, 15	1, 2, 12, 14, 15	15	

Table 7.5: Partitioning the reachability matrix

Iterations	Elements	Reachability Set	Antecedent Set	Intersection	Level
	1	1, 12, 13, 14, 15	1, 2, 12, 13, 14	1, 12, 13, 14	
	2	1, 2, 12, 13, 14, 15	2	2	
	12	1, 12, 13, 14, 15	1, 2, 12, 13, 14	1, 12, 13, 14	
Iteration VI	**13**	1, 12, 13, 14	1, 2, 12, 13, 14, 15	1, 12, 13, 14	VI
	14	1, 12, 13, 14, 15	1, 2, 12, 13, 14	1, 12, 13, 14	
	15	13, 15	1, 2, 12, 14, 15	15	
	1	1, 12, 14, 15	1, 2, 12, 14	1, 12, 14	
	2	1, 2, 12, 14, 15	2	2	
Iteration VII	**12**	1, 12, 14, 15	1, 2, 12, 14	1, 12, 14	
	14	1, 12, 14, 15	1, 2, 12, 14	1, 12, 14	
	15	15	1, 2, 12, 14, 15	15	VI
	1	1, 12	1, 2, 12	1, 12	VII
Iteration VIII	**2**	1, 2, 12	2	2	
	12	1, 12	1, 2, 12	1, 12	VII
	14	1, 12, 14	1, 2, 12, 14	1, 12, 14	VII
Iteration IX	**2**	2	2	2	VIII

Table 7.6: Final level of elements in ISM

Element Code	Element name	Levels in ISM
E6	Elimination of staff function	I
E7	Lack of Long term Career paths	I
E11	Competition for Resources	I
E5	Underestimation of staff function by line	II
E4	Lack of consensus	II
E9	Different personality by virtue of position	III
E10	Overbearing attitude	III
E8	Conflict of Interests	IV
E3	Role ambiguity	V
E13	Stability of tenure of functions	VI
E15	Ambiguity in relative status	VII
E1	Imbalance in distribution of authority	VIII
E12	Functional Categorization	VIII
E14	Design of reporting & control systems	VIII
E2	Lack of moderator or judicial body	IX

Step 5: Developing conical matrix - Conical matrix is developed by clustering factors in the same level across the rows and columns of the final reachability matrix as shown in Table 7.7.

Table 7.7: Conical Form of Reachability Matrix

Elements	11	6	7	5	8	4	10	9	3	13	14	15	1	12	2
11	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
6	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
7	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	0
5	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
8	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
4	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
10	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
9	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
3	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
13	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	0
14	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0
15	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0
1	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	0
12	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0
2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1

The driving and dependence power of a factor is then derived by summing up the number of 1s in the rows and columns respectively. The Matrix is shown Table 7.8.

Table 7.8: Driving power and dependence in reachability matrix

Elements	11	6	7	5	8	4	10	9	3	13	14	15	1	12	2	Driving power	Ranks
11	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**1**	**X**
6	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	**3**	**IX**
7	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	**5**	**VIII**
5	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**3**	**IX**
8	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**7**	**VI**
4	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	**6**	**VII**
10	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	**9**	**V**
9	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**6**	**VII**
3	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	**7**	**VI**
13	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	**13**	**III**
14	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	**14**	**II**
15	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	**10**	**IV**
1	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	**10**	**IV**
12	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	**14**	**II**
2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	**15**	**I**
Dependence	**12**	**11**	**11**	**10**	**10**	**11**	**11**	**9**	**5**	**8**	**6**	**7**	**5**	**6**	**1**		
Ranks	**I**	**I**	**I**	**II**	**II**	**I**	**I**	**III**	**VI**	**IV**	**V**	**IV**	**VI**	**V**	**VII**		

Step 6: Developing a directed graph: From the conical form of reachability matrix, the preliminary digraph including transitive links is obtained. After removing the indirect links, a final digraph is developed. The top level variables are the performance outcomes, the ones which depend on other variables for being achieved. The next level is operational variables. As the name suggests, actual operations can be carried out on these variables to reach the desired outcome. The lowest level of the digraph represents the strategic variables. These variables form important components for strategy development at top executive level.

Step 7: The nodes of the elements are then replaced with statements to form the ISM model from this digraph as shown in Figure 7.1.

Step 8: The ISM model is checked for any inconsistency and necessary modifications are made.

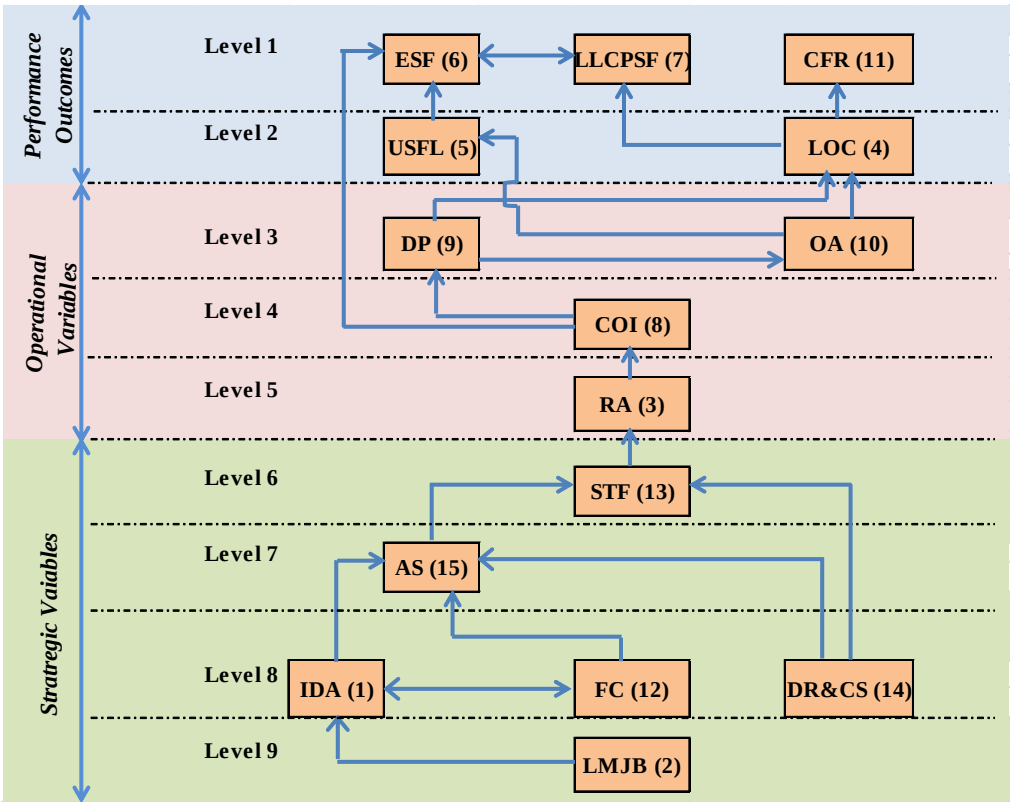

Figure 7.1: ISM- based model of the variables for understanding line and staff discrepancies

7.5.3 MICMAC analysis interpretations from digraph

The MICMAC analysis is then applied on conical matrix to analyze the driving and dependence power of variables causing line and staff conflict. MICMAC analysis classifies the variables as autonomous, linkage, dependent and independent one on the basis of their driving and dependence power. The four clusters in MICMAC for line-staff conflict are shown in Figure 7.2.

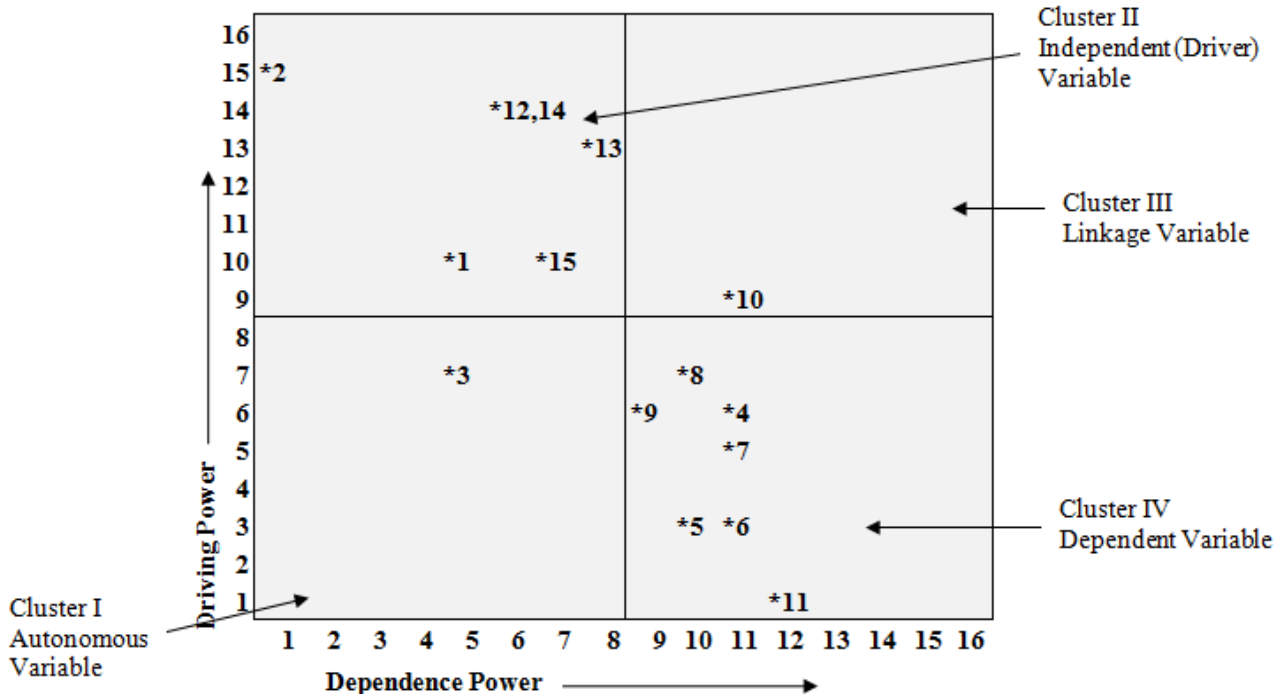

Figure 7.2: Cluster of variables inducing line and staff discrepancies

The interpretations have been made by combining the results of ISM technique (demonstrated through digraph) and the MICMAC analysis. The independent, dependent and linkage variables in MICMAC analysis corresponds to the strategic, outcome and operational variables respectively. Variables like- lack of moderator or judicial body (2), imbalance in distribution of authority (1), functional categorization (12), design of reporting and control system (14), ambiguity in status (15) and stability of tenure of a function (13) are at the lowest levels in digraph (Figure 7.1) and therefore represent strategic variables. They are lying in cluster II of MICMAC analysis (Figure 7.2) which indicates that they are independent drivers for line and staff discrepancies. This means that they strongly influence line and staff conflict. Here we can conclude that the mangers should consider and incorporate these variables while formulating strategies.

The next level is represented by role ambiguity (3), conflict of interests (8), different personality (9) and overbearing attitude (10) as operational variables. All these variables are serving as linkage between the strategic and performance variables. The managers can directly work on these variables to eliminate line and staff conflict. However, here it is important to note that although the variables 8 and 9 are falling in cluster IV (dependent variable) but have very high driving power in

comparison to others of this quadrant and are therefore considered with cluster III linkage variables. However, variable 10 is already lying in cluster III. Moreover, role ambiguity (3) is falling in Cluster I of the MICMAC analysis (Figure 7.2). This variable has weak driving and dependence power. It is relatively disconnected and bears no significant relevance to the system. Therefore here it is called autonomous variable and shall be ignored.

Last and the top level represents performance outcome. It includes lack of consensus (4), underestimation of staff function by line (5), competition for resources (11), elimination of staff function (6) and lack of long term career paths for staff function (7). They are falling in cluster IV in MICMAC. They have low driving and high dependence power and thus are dependent on other variables. These are the outcome of the interplay between strategic and operational variables and exhibits the final performance outcome i.e. conflict. They represent the result of the effect of the variables at lower levels. These variables cannot further influence any other variable and exhibits the final outcome i.e. line and staff conflict. Absence of such variables demonstrates that there are no discrepancies between line and staff members.

7.6 Findings and discussions

In the preceding sections, we have discussed some variables and their interplay in driving line and staff discrepancies in business organizations. Moreover, considering the ill effects of line and staff conflict on individuals and firm's performance, it has become important to resolve this. It is important to understand how the human body is an effective organization which is free from all conflicts. This can be done by examining the status of these variables (strategic, operational and performance) in human body organization. This process may lead to certain questions, like are the same strategic variables as revealed in the framework developed, being considered in human body? How do they influence line and staff relationship in a desired way? What are the other factors in human body that are possibly influencing line and staff relationship? These are some questions that can be answered by visualizing the line and staff functions in the human body.

In human body, contribution of both *line and staff organs are indispensable* for achievement and maintenance of *bodily functions* (as our hands will only pick the food and put it in the mouth when smelled (nice) by nose, and our legs will make us walk only when the path is seen by the eyes). Both line and staff organs are

considered *equal in status* and there is *no disparity in the authority delegated* to them; like, our body does not consider one of them superior or inferior to other. Therefore, firstly, top management in organizations must treat both line and staff members equally important in their respective roles and both are instrumental for organizational effectiveness. Major moves which top management is required to take in this aspect are parity in delegation of authority and status. As a result of this action, none of them will *overbear their importance* and will not *underestimate other's role* similar to human body. This is also evident from the systems approach as every function is inter-dependent and thus all are important.

The *presence of judicial body or moderator* (brain) as directing, coordinating and control system is another strategic variable, well taken care in human body. It handles the chaos that could be created due to conflicting interests or disagreement in consensus between line and staff organs (if any). For example, if the food smells foul and bad in taste but our body is starving. Thus, in the given situation our body organs need energy but our sense organs are informing that the available food seems not very good in taste. In this case, the brain (with the help of nervous and endocrine system) signals appetite and instructs our hands to eat food. Here the conflict is actually handled by prioritizing the suggestion made by line and staff function in order of their relative importance to the body in that specific situation. Like in this example it is more important to take food ignoring the information provided by the sensory organs. Similarly, the top management in corporate body should intervene in situations where conflicting views are offered by the groups and shall consider one which is in support of achievement of organizational goals. In fact, top management involvement can remove personal bias in the opinions of various groups.

Also as a result of this action, there would be *no internal competition* between the corporate functions similar to human body where there is no competition among various organs where each part in the whole body collaborates and runs together. In human body, actions of various organs (tongue, hand, stomach- members of different functional category) are directed towards common objective (food intake by hand after tasting it with tongue and then its digestion by stomach for healthy survival) which is *not influenced by their individual interests*.

Furthermore in human body, only the sensory organs (division of support) are directly in touch with the external world and the line members are fully dependent on them for getting inputs from the external stimulus. Therefore because such clearly

defined *functional departmentalization*, there is no chance that our line organs (voluntary and involuntary) would even think of *eliminating the supporting sense organs*. Here the organizations should also learn from human body that there should be optimality in design for flexibility. In critical decisions, no flexibility should be granted while for routine activities; optimal degree of flexibility may be permitted.

Our body has a very well *designed reporting and control system* which eliminates escalation of conflicts most of the time. Here, the organizations should learn from human body that a feed forward control system in the form of design and reporting system could prevent occurrence of conflicts.

Hence to sum up, it can be said that human body's structure and strategies meet all requisites necessary to avoid conflict. Besides it is also clear from the above discussion that the variables responsible for line and staff conflict in businesses are effectively managed by our body's design and control processes. The interplay between the variables discussed is also contributing much to the collaboration between line and staff efforts and elimination of conflict in the human body. The functional categorization in our body is limited to allocation and achievement of tasks. It does not distinguish the groups as high or low in status or authority. In certain exceptional instances where conflict could arise (as discussed), the brain serves as judiciary body. Also the working of both groups is aligned in such a way that they cannot bypass top management (brain) decisions. This way the strategies followed in human body do not lead to undesirable outcomes as observed in case of business organization, like competition, demeaning others etc. Therefore we can expect that the managers can draw useful insights from the design and control strategy adopted by human body.

7.7 Conclusions

This chapter is an attempt to learn how business organization's can be managed effectively and efficiently by exploring the principles and processes found in nature's best creation, i.e. the human body. A framework has been developed in this chapter that can serve as a tool for top management to understand the variables of line and staff conflict in business organizations. For each of these variables, working of human body is analyzed to derive meaningful insights for elimination of inter group conflict in organizations. In this effort it has been found that an optimal degree of flexibility, top management involvement as a moderator or judicial body, equity, clearly defined

roles and appropriate design and reporting relationships are major strategies that can be adopted by managers to eliminate conflict. These strategies perhaps will help in eliminating issues like overstating self's and underestimating other's position, competition which harbours differences among the various groups. However, the framework developed in this paper is based on the perception of only a few management experts who were part of ISM survey and the results are quite general. Further analysis of insights observed will probably facilitate organizations significantly in managing line-staff or other inter-group conflicts.