Conflict at workplace

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Abstract

Twenty first century demandshigh professional obligation and high performance from professional working at any workplace.The employer expects high performance from employee in any work condition within the time limits. Workplace is a place where a professional demonstrates his/her creativity. He/she strives to attain the shared goals of workplace. While attaining these goals conflicts arouses. Conflicts due to lack of perception, communication, miscommunication, poor communication prejudices, half-truths, biases, personality influences, backgrounds and experience, work culture and different values, unhealthy workplace, personality clashes and mistrust among employees. This studyaims at the stem of conflicts at workplace. Define conflicts, different types of workplace conflicts and their reasons. Also describe to cope up with conflict resolution and create healthy environment at workplace. Workplace conflicts results in poor performance of the professional, increases stress, anxiety and burnout levels among them. This paper analyses how to move from conflict to wellbeing at workplace.

Keywords: Conflicts, personality clashes, communication, performance, anxiety, stress and burnout

Introduction:

Workplace is a place for a professional to show his professional aspiration and his creativity, his /obligation towards attainment of goals. At workplace a professional community with shared goals communicates with each other in different patterns. A group of people with different belief, values, habits, choices, skills and work style come under common roof to attain the shared goals hence due to such variation chances of development of conflicts were high at workplace. Workplace conflicts are not good for the institute and employee as well as. These conflicts impact on both of them. It also affects the productivity and increase in absenteeism. So, it is necessary to address the stem roots of conflicts at workplace, reasons behind it and better way to address these conflicts.

Concept

Conflicts are evident at workplace because it is a gathering of employees with different perspectives regarding, thought process, values, decision making, professional qualities, caste, creed and religion. It is essential to address the conflicts intelligently, if they are not dealt properly the performance of employees and productivity of an organization will decline. Thought behind this study is to find out the reasons behind the workplace conflict, there types and to techniques to come up with the conflict resolution.

Meaning of the words:

Conflict: An active disagreement between people with opposing opinions or principles
        (dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/English/conflict)
Workplace: A place where people do their jobs
        (dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/English/Workplace)

Definition:

1. "In interpersonal relations, conflict denotes the disagreement, discord, and friction that occur when the actions or beliefs of one or more individuals are unacceptable to and resisted by others." (APA dictionary of Psychology)
2. With regard to psychology, the conflict of differing or contrastive feeling-based or inspirational drives in the same person. (N., Sam M.S.)
3. With regard to psychoanalysis, the battle between unaware and aware drives, particularly between the superego, ego, and the id, which is thought to be a huge reserve of neuroses. (N., Sam M.S.)
4. With regard to interpersonal communications, the argument, conflict, and tension that arise whenever the behaviours or values of some people are not approvable to and rejected by other people. (N., Sam M.S.)

Types of workplace conflicts:

Workplace follows interpersonal communication pattern. At these places mainly two types of conflicts were evident.

1. **Substantive Conflicts:** These conflicts develop due to people's decisions, ideas, actions directly relating to their job are in opposition.
2. **Personalized Conflicts**: Conflicts develop due to, when people just don't go along

Reasons behind conflicts at workplace:

There are different reasons behind the conflicts at workplaces some of them are enlisted here. There are different unique types of the conflicts reasons as per the workplace nature and its working. If it is educational institute the conflicts are unique and differs from a medical practicing institute. But some are common among them. These reasons are found common at every workplace.

1. **Personality clashes:** These types of conflict in the workplace are often fuelled by emotion and perceptions about somebody else's motives and character. For example, a team leader jumps on someone for being late because she perceives the team member as being lazy and inconsiderate. The team member sees the team leader as out to get him. Conflicts develops due to individual differences may count in it.
2. **Warring Egos:** Egos among employees is also a reason for developing conflicts at workplace. The hierarchy among the post, senior junior issues, experience develops egos among the employees. The person who had hand full of experience thinks that he knows everything, and if a junior or new employee does not follow the hierarchy, his senior or ultimate boss show anger on him.
3. **Heavy workloads:** insufficient human resource burdens the employee to do more. He/she will have to handle the tasks of more than one employee. Overtime, work without break, increased working hours also develops conflict at workplace.
4. **Inadequate resources:** efficiency of any institute depends on the resources it has. Efficient resources result in efficient outcome. If the professionals have not sufficient resources to perform their tasks, then the conflicts with management, seniors and authorities develops among them. Adequate Human and physical resources motivate professionals to work more enthusiastically, incentives attract the professionals to work more efficiently.
5. **Poor Leadership from top of the organization:** Leadership plays an important role in developing institute and enhance the performance of their employees. Leader should be quite competent enough to take decisions. If he/she fails to take decisions then the chances of development of conflicts is high. Favours, impartial behaviour of a leader, lack of role clarity, unable to assign the tasks, unable to distribute responsibilities, these poor leadership qualities create distractions among the professionals and they will not able to focus on their tasks.
6. **Clash of values:** in Indian perspective where their variation in values, people differ each other from caste, religion, and beliefs. Even followers of the same religion differ from their belief. If administration and management follow particular value system which the employee is not comfortable in it create conflicts among the employees and management. In country like India uniformity is not possible. Here people practice different beliefs and speak several languages and dialects. At workplace the debate regarding his/her beliefs, judge him/her according to her belief, or assess his/her performance on the basis of his caste, religion affects his/her performance. In India the recent Hijab issue is an example of clash of values, where Muslim girls were forced to remove their Hijab in name of uniformity. Issues like this creates controversies and affect the performance, develops anxiety and stress among the professionals.

Outcomes of conflicts at Workplace:

Conflicts have positive and negative outcomes.

Negative outcomes of conflicts:

1. Personal insult and attacks on employee, management and authorities.
2. Sickness among working professionals
3. Due egos and hierarchy cross departmental issues may raise
4. Bullying, particular employee who had raised the issues or act as a whistle-blower may fall victim of bullying.
5. Transfer of particular employee or leader is possible, due to this conflict may be addressed differently
6. Charge shifting the project head, or lead position may be given to someone else and the leader may be force to leave the charge, go on long leave or work under someone hired.
7. Project failure is the worst outcome. Conflicts at workplace may fall the institute downward.

8. The employee and management may be experience stress and anxiety which is not good for their wellbeing and mental health

9. Performance of employee may decrease to notable extent. His creativity and ability to resolve the issues and conflict may decrease if conflicts were not handled properly.

Positive outcomes of conflicts:conflicts also have the positive outcomes. Where the conflicts develops and the employees and management look at them differently then they will receive positive outcomes as well

1. **Better understanding of other persons:** during conflict situation one can study, think, review, analyse and reflect others perception towards an issue. Individuals increase ability to listen and respect others perspective and their point of view. During this process one can gain knowledge about ithers beliefs, religion and practices.

2. **Improved working relationship:** when conflict develops among different people and when it is addressed properly then the rapport and bonding among the employees is increases. Their working relations and ability to collaborate with each other enhances. Individuals learn to respect each other and learn our own role in the organization and system.

3. **Better Solution to problems:** Problem can be viewed differently. The management, employees and related person come with new ideas and innovative solutions, that may increase their creativity and productivity as well. Problem solving skill also enhance.

4. **Team spirit and increased performance:** when conflicts are seen differently, then team spirit and will power to achieve more and more is possible. Rapport building and collaboration enhance the group performance.

Dealing with Workplace conflicts:

Leadership and conflict go hand in hand. If conflicts were not addressed in proper way it is a great failure of leadership. So, at workplace it is essential to deal with conflicts very cleverly. Here are some suggestions to dealing with the conflicts at workplace.

1. **Setting rules, agreements and policies:** workplace is professional platform to show case our own creativity. Where decisions, rules and policies are source of developing conflicts among its employees and organization. It would be better to set written agreements, rules and policies transparently. Where every employee should know his/ her rights, powers and limits. Setting transparent rules and executing the proceedings of organization through this will decrease the development of conflicts among the employees and organization and management. During setting the rules, agreements and policies it should be necessary to consider the human values, beliefs and sentiments of employees. The policies based on discrimination, biases, prejudices, undemocratic and affecting values are sources of conflicts so, to deal with conflicts managers, authorities should consider these points.

2. **Effective management:** Management and leadership playsimportant role in conflict resolution. If conflicts were not identified, addressed and resolved timely they develop controversies. Workplace violence, bullies, must dealt accordingly and adequately. It will help in employee relation management. A leader should create healthy relationship among its employees if he/she allows or ignores workplace bullies, violence and poor behaviours will certainly experience damaged employee relations.

3. **Fair Grievances processes:** organization should set up and practice fair grievances processes. Every employee should have equal chance to register the grievances and he/she must be listened and he/she must have a chance to present his/her point of view. He/she must have allotted ample time to prove or present his point of view. Partial behaviours develop conflicts. Organizations should have written policies and definitions pertaining to dispute mechanisms available in the organization that provide clear guidance for the employer and the employees. The policy should state the scope and limitations of each mechanism and spell out each method's terms, such as eligibility, frequency, decision process, and required sign-off and approvals for settling a matter.Employers that implement a system through which parties can resolve conflict within the company create incentives for employees to avoid engaging in costly and time-consuming external litigation. Organizations typically have multiple ways for employees to work out interpersonal or organizational differences. The existence of a grievance system may also improve employee morale because employees feel they have options for pursuing conflict resolution.

Common steps in resolving conflicts

1. **Open door Policy:** This is the first step for resolving conflict at workplace. Where every employee has equal opportunity to register his complaint regarding the conflict, he/she is experiencing. Here he/she will talk to his immediate supervisor about the conflict. The supervisor must listen to both parties and must come with better solution, according to the written and agreed policy of organization.

2. **Management review:** if open door policy system fails to resolve the conflict, then it should be moved to higher level managers. Here manager review the decision taken in open door policy step. He/she will also provide equal, subsequent opportunity to both the parties and come up with better solution.
3. **Peer review:** at this step conflicts presented before a panel of employees and expert who had experience of resolving conflicts. It is most democratic way of resolving the conflict where all the employees participate in decision making.

Techniques to resolve the conflict

Following are some of the techniques which can be practiced to resolve the workplace conflicts.

1. **Facilitation:** organization may appoint a facilitator to resolve the dispute between to employees. A facilitator maybe neutral employee in the organization or any employee that both the parties trust on. The facilitator should listen to both parties and help both the parties to come up with better solution. He/she should not render a judgement or should not decide the merits of the dispute. He/she is only here to facilitate the parties.
2. **Mediator:**A mediator is a neutral third party who helps the conflicting parties explore innovative solutions to their dispute. Mediators can be internal employees trained in conflict management and mediation, or they can be trained external professionals who have no perceived conflict of interest with the employer. Resolving a dispute through mediation should be voluntary.
3. **Arbitration:** at this stepwitnesses were presented and verified thoroughly through cross examination. An arbitrator issues the binding decision to both parties. This step is time consuming and costly.

Conclusion:

Conflicts are unavoidable part of organization. Leadership and conflicts go hand in hand. Every employee of the organization has his own way of thinking and viewpoints. A leader or manager cannot make happy to everyone but he/she should come up with a mediating line with written and agreed set of rules, definitions, work culture, flow of work, decision making process. Workplace conflicts have different dimension to develop and grow. The reasons behind it are Personality clashes, Warring egos, Stress, Heavy workloads, Inadequate resources, Poor leadership from the top of the organization, Lack of honesty and openness, Poor management, Lack of role clarity, Lack of clarity about accountability, Clash of values, Poor selection or pairing of teams, Taboo topics, Poor performance, Bullying/ Harassment and Perceived discrimination. If conflicts develop and grows the employee of any organization may feel like, Demotivated, Angry and frustrated, Nervous, Sleepless and stressed and some of them may take it as opportunity to learn and enhance they may feel like confident, exited and energized. It means that conflicts have pro and cons. It depends on organization and employee how they deal with conflicts. Conflicts has positive and negative outcomes which can affect the performance of organization and employees. Some of the negative outcomes maybe like, Personal insults/ attacks, Sickness/absence, Cross departmental conflicts, Bullying, Transfer, Charge shifting, Deputation, Project failure, Impact on performance, Anxiety and stress and others also. Conflicts have positive side also like, better understanding of others, Improved working relationship, better solution to problem, Higher performance in a team, Increased motivation, Major innovation or Idea was born. If conflicts were dealt accordingly and addressed timely it will create healthy environment in organization and enhance productivity of employees. Facilitation, mediator and arbitration are some of the techniques used in conflict resolution at workplace.

Suggestions for further research in conflict at workplace

Workplaces are of different types with distinct objectives and work culture. Researcher may explore conflicts at specific workplace like,

1. Conflicts at primary school /secondary school /higher secondary school/ college/University environment
2. Conflicts at medical organizations
3. Conflicts at corporate organization
   Etc.

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