DYSFUNCTIONALITY OF PERSONALITY-BASED CONFLICTS IN ORGANIZATIONS

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ABSTRACT

The distinctive nature of individuals in their behaviors is rooted in the difference in the psycho-structural dynamics of their makeup, which is identified as a major source of conflict between individuals in organizations. The purpose of this paper is to identify the dysfunctional ties of personality-based conflict, as a mean of managing destructive confrontations between individuals in the workplace. The paper adopted constructivism as a research paradigm to interpret the dysfunctional characteristic of personality-based conflict in the workplace. It identified the types, causes and implications of personality-triggered disagreement in work organizations. It concluded that the traditional view of personality based conflict does no good to the organization in the long run, as settlement is often clothed with pretence, and parties seldom comprise their ego. However, in the short run, it may help to expose the actors' mind, aid collaboration, etc. the paper suggested that short run advantages should be use to magnify possible gains in workplace conflicts.

Keywords: Personality Based Conflict, Dysfunctionality, Functional Conflict, Conflict Thought.

1. INTRODUCTION

People are distinct in their individual nature and as they converge in organizations. Organizations tend to be very complex entities. The complexities embedded in organization most times manifest in conflict between individuals and between groups particularly between individuals, disagreements on the basis of personal factors in a relationship, factors in the task, and factors in the work process, may constitute the triggers for conflict (Turne & Weed, 1983; Bernard, 2014; and Robbins, 2005). Robbins (2005) contended that of all kinds of conflict, personality-based, task-based, and process-based; the most difficult to settle, and the one with most dysfunctional outcome, is the personality conflict. The dysfunctional nature of personality based conflict lend itself to the fact that it does not add up to the organizational interest, rather it demeans.

Unfortunately, research has shown that personality-based conflicts are more endemic in organizations (Deets & Steveson, 2015; and Kinicki & Kreitner, 2008). The triggers of personality-based conflicts tend to be embedded in wrong communication handling, personal characterics poor work structure and individual orientations. Thus, friction may arise between persons not for the sake of advancing organizational interest, but for cheer personal reasons

bordering on protection of one's prestige or status, and in most case a clash of ego and superiority (Robbins, Judge & Vorha, 2010). All result to dysfunctional consequences with mere organization productivity.

This paper examines the dysfunctionality of personality-based conflict, as a means to provide adequate understanding pros if any, and the cons of relationship based disagreements in the workplace. The paper also provide handling possibilities of personality-based conflicts to reduce its attendant dysfunctionalities.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The Concept of Personality-Based Conflict

Conflict is any form of disagreement between parties, which Robbins, Judge & Vohra (2010:478) contended that it is "a process that begins when one party perceives that another party has affect something that the first party cares about". Specifically, personality-based conflict or relationship conflict focuses on interpersonal relationships. Inherent in this type of conflict is that friction and interpersonal hostilities embedded in relationship conflicts increase personality clashes and decrease mutual understanding which frustrates the completion of goals or intended tasks (Borisoff & Victor, 1998).

Conflict in some perspective is seen as inevitable and necessary phenomenon in organizations. Borisoff & Victor argued that the understanding conflict is to group the perspectives of conflict into functional, dysfunctional, structural and interactive paradigms. Different people have dissimilar assessment on personality conflict. Those who see conflict as functional feel that it offers a collective purpose, some think that personality clash is situational in the sense that opinions are shared under a certain condition. The interactive theory of conflict suggests that conflict allows employees to actively participate in decision making. Simmel (2009), a follower of functional approach of conflict defined personality conflict as "consideration to resolve different contradictions; it is a way of accomplishing specific kind of agreement even if it will be through the extermination of one of the disagreeing parties". Simmel (2009) opined that conflict is a tool for exposure and settlement, despite its sabotages on others - Conflicts exposes individuals into groups and creates confidence among them.

According to Simmel (2009), there are three ways conflict can be ended. Personality conflict can lead to victory over another. Personality conflict can be ended if one party decides to give up on the cause of the contention. Personality conflict can be ended by creating an approachable atmosphere amongst the parties. He also noted that all conflicts may not be ended through dialogue.

According to Coser (2016), Personality conflict is seen as "the clash of standards and concern, the difficulty between what is and what some group feel should be". Coser (2016), further noted that conflict "is a fight over standards and rights to scarce status, power and resources in which the objectives of the opponents are to counteract, wound or eradicate the opponents. Bercovitch (2000), a follower of the situational theory of conflict defines conflict

as a "condition which stimulates incorruptible objectives or standards between different parties." Bercovitch (2000), argued that conflict is situational. Conflict exists as a result of several kinds of conditions which may include individual inspiration and external factors. Considering the interactive approach to conflict, Folger (1993) explained conflict as "the communication of symbiotic people who recognize unharmonious objectives and intervention from each other in accomplishing these goals." Interactive approach is classified into interdependence and perception. Interdependence involves a scenario where the future of an individual is attached to the action of another individual.

Conflict does not only come about when standards or needs are actually, objectively incompatibles or when conflict is manifested in action, it exists when one of the parties perceives it to exist (Bernard, 2014). Hocker and Wilmot *(*1985*),* in their opinion explained conflict as "an expressed struggle between at least two interdependent parties who perceive unharmonious goals, scarce rewards and interference from the other party in achieving their goals. In the business world, differences in such appearances as work involvement, disposition, peer group, atmosphere and situation all lead to difference in personal attitudes, principles, standards or requirements. Considering the definitions stated above, it could be acknowledged that there is no generally accepted working definition of personality conflict. Different persons have their different understandings on 'conflict'. (Leung, 2010). According Mcshane and Glinow (2008) conflict is "a process in which one party suggests that its interests are being opposed by another party," and tends to resist any subjugation.

Thoughts on Conflict Theory

According to Knapp (1994), **C.** Wright Mills was identified as the exponent of conflict theory. Mills' opinion is that collective arrangements are made through conflict among individuals of several motives and available resources. He highlighted that persons and assets are controlled by these structures and by the "unequal distribution of power and resources in the society." According to Mills, the influential personalities of America "developed from the combination of cooperate elites, the pentagon and the executive division of government." Mills' theory explained that the procedures and principles of the influential personalities could lead to an "increased escalation of conflict of weapons of mass destruction, and possibly the annihilation of human race" (Bernard, 2014)

Alan Sears's theory of conflict appears to be the most modem. Alan (2008) opined that:

  i.   There are so much gaps that result to struggle in the society. Conflict that occurs because of the gaps could be resolved by a primary change on the present associations in the culture.

  ii.   Persons who are favoured are likely to develop a patterned interest that is different from the prevailing structure.

  iii. Innovation is the major tool for economic growth and advancement.

  iv.   The function of theory is to actualize individual capacity and changing the society instead of retaining the power structure.

Transition of Conflict Thought

Conflict can be seen from different ways. It is a certainty in life and must be regarded as a circumstance that must happen in everyday life. (Robbin et.al, 2003). It is seen as normal because of the irregularity in group life. Conflict is advantageous and important because it can lead to new way of reasoning when properly handled. It is easy for most individuals to allow some conflicting situations unresolved instead of tackling the discrepancies. In the study of personality conflict the following views are considered as transition of conflict thought..

Traditional View: The traditional view of conflict was identified between 1930- 1940. Robbin (2005) explained that it is the opinion of a certain school of thought that conflict need not be permitted to occur as it poses some challenges to the team. Conflict is considered as a bad phenomenon and is connected with crises. Conflict emanate from lack of common agreement and in a situation of lack of confidence within a collection of persons. Therefore it becomes necessary to attend quickly to the circumstance that generates to conflict and proffer solution to them to promote corporate productivity.

Human Relations View: The human relation view also called the contemporary view was identified between l940 -1970. It stated that conflict is synonymous to everybody. This philosophy embraces conflict. Conflict could function as a benefit to productivity (Robbin, 2005). Disagreements occur periodically and it is essential to proffer possible attempts to stop conflict as instinctive and is unavoidable in a corporate environment. Therefore it ought to not be understood as a bad phenomenon rather as a worthy tool that enhances effective performance.

The Interactions Opinion: This does not just view conflict as good but similarly an imperative device to boost human productivity. Managing conflict is encouraging natural structures in an effort to enhance individual performance and invent a new philosophy (Robbins, 2003). Conflict enhances good performance, though not all conflict could be viewed as positive. The internationalist classified conflict into task conflict, relationship and process conflict. This disposition contends that an excessively peaceful and tranquil society represents weakness, placidity and unhealthiness, as conflict is a sign of active society.

Types of Personality Conflict

Personality conflict occurs in circumstances where there is dissimilarity between two persons on a particular matter which might not be bad. If conflict is properly managed, it generates to creativity in solving problems. It helps to reduce errors and also allows one to take advantage of misunderstandings (Sloboda, 2010).

Basically, there are two major types of personality conflicts on the bases of its ultimate outcomes.

- Functional personality-based conflict

- Dysfunctional personality conflict

Functional Personality-Based Conflict

According to Sloboda (2010), conflict makes an individual to have a better idea on ways to resolve variances, mitigate against errors, and make the best of disagreements. Functional conflict functions as an instrument for productivity in an establishment. It drives individuals in an establishment to strive to enhance their capacity and their inputs to the well-being of the organization. For a business to succeed, conflict is needed. Conflict enables the organization to deliberate on matters of controversy on a round table and originate innovative ideas. Functional conflict enables the business manager to gather statistics on the belief of the employees and in turn proffer lasting solutions. Personality conflict helps to keep the manager abreast of the difficulties in an organization and gives him the privilege to make positive amendments on improving on the circumstance. (Bacal & Associates, 2012).

Richards (2012) in his view on functional conflict stated that conflict has advantages to the organization because it creates room for members to freely express themselves and guide against industrial action that threaten the well-being of an organization. The emphasis on the capability to resolve conflict properly to enable it functions as an instrument for organizational growth instead of being a problem.

Conflict is said to be functional when it is said to be positive in the perspectives listed as: Conflict Leads to Motivation, Conflict Generates Questions, Personality Conflict Improves Collaboration, Personality Conflict Exposes the Mind and Conflict Leads to Growth

Dysfunctional Conflict

The dysfunctional conflict is based on the fact that businesses are set up to actualize a specific objective by setting up parameters that specifically explains the duties, hierarchy and job schedules (Bacal & Associates, 2012). According to White (2012), those who found themselves working in places where conflict is not properly handled often have poor job satisfaction and low productivity.

Dysfunctional conflict arises from destructive disagreements which ultimately manifest in unproductive outcomes. such outcomes negate organizational goals. Some forms of such conflicts have their triggers on purely individuals' interests, which tends to be incongruous with the organization reason for being. Thus, any conflict that resulted to negative outcome is classified as dysfunctional. Robbins (2005) argued that personality-based conflicts usually attend to individual interests, always result to dysfunctional consequences which rob off the organization from its intended goals.

Causes of Personality- Based Conflict

Personality conflict in organizations can be caused by the following:

i.   Variance in Level of Expertise: Some employees at some points develop to experts in their field and most times acquire vast knowledge of their duties. A situation where employees are experts in their field it can generate conflict because they do not understand one another's roles. Where employees of unequal expertise have job interdependence, intolerance breeds, with the actors having personal friction on the job.

ii.   Different Objectives: In situations where there are discrepancies in the objectives of the units in an organization can lead to conflict. The subsystems in an organization may have opposing objectives that managers in such units may fail to handle it as an organizational related problems, but take it personal, and escalate the misunderstanding along line of personal status or prestige.

iii. Inadequate Resources: In most organizations, employees are expected to work with a common material. In event of the limited availability of the said material in the organization there is a tendency for conflict to occur. (Mcshane & Gilnow, 2008). The inadequate resources comprises of finance, materials and human resources etc. sometimes, tolerance is dispensed and the individuals concerned take it personal, as the conflict moves from what and how to be done to who is involved.

iv.   Reliance on Others: In a situation where people depend on one another in order to carry out a given assignment, conflict may occur. The inability of one party to complete a given task can easily be blamed on another who they may be relying on to either supply the needed material or to handle the task alongside with them. Here again, personal ego may not only supersede, but will usually superintends personal status and worth or prestige.

v.   Power Tussle: Most organizations suffer conflict among managers and employees because some individuals do not like to be controlled by others. Most managers suffer conflict with their employees especially when they try to be tough on the employees. Such individuals may be on McCllands' need for power identification.

Implications of Personality-Based Conflict

As earlier stated, when conflict is not properly managed, it can have negative impact on the productivity of an organization. It can lead to lack of cooperation among members, poor communication, low morale, increased stress, not able to deliver on time, poor customer care lack of confidence on one another, backbiting. (Maureen 2007).

On a broader-view, personality-based conflict has consequences on both the individual, employee and the entire organization. The negative effect of conflict is listed below: Employee may lose interest on the job Individual develops some fear on the job; some may be tempted to take to some habit. E.g. smoking, drinking etc. as conflict can lead to frustration. Some employees may develop some health challenges as a result of personality conflicts in an organization. This can be further viewed in terms of effects on organization, staff and customers.

Implication of Conflict on Organization: When conflict is poorly handled, it hinders performance. Various research x-rayed high level of time loss in handling conflict in an organization. Poor conflict management in an organization has some negative effects on the staff welfare. This most times leads to truancy among staff in the workplace. There is a high level of connection between truancy and work stress and demanding a stop from combating with members of staff. Conflict in organization also discourages absenteeism at work place. It is enables staff to come to work against all odds. Implication of truancy is not popularly studies.

Implication of Conflict to the Staff: Conflict increases fatigue, loss of self-reliance, discouragement and work stress. These all generates to loss of fulfillment at work place. The adverse effect of this occurrence bothers the staff as well as his or her household and loved ones. Staff affected by conflict suffers relationship gap and most times feel separated from one another. They resort to segregation. Prolonged conflict makes those involved to avoid association, stop communication, hold back information, and give out fake news.

Implication of Conflict to Customers: There is not much study on the implication of mismanaged conflict on clients. Organizational conflict hinders the level of goods and services provided to the customer. The negative effect of conflict on the customer may bring doubt in the mind of the customer on the organizations structure and scope. Some of the implication of conflict on the customer may not be visible but they may cause a decline in the reliance of the customer to the organizations good and services.

Dysfunctionality of Personality Conflict: The dysfunctional effect of personality based conflict include: Personality Conflict poses threat to the employee's productivity and the organizational goal; In the event when an organization is under conflict, individuals may use it as an opportunity to achieve their own personal endeavors at the expense of the organization; If conflict is dragged for a long period, it could affect the employee health and most time could lead to mental imbalance. Conflict resolution often consumes quality time which would have been used to engage the individual in active production; and Conflict could result to low productivity, bias, depression, poor customer satisfaction, etc.

Resolution of Personality Conflict: Conflict cannot be avoided in an organization. Conflicts have some notable importance when properly managed. It helps to expose the challenges and puts the stakeholders on motion to find lasting solution to the cause of the conflict. But when conflict goes beyond control it has negative influence on the parties involved. It therefore becomes very imperative to manage conflict in an organization.

In resolving personality conflict, the following steps can be considered: Ascertain the real cause of the conflict; Change the mindset of the individuals involve and try to make them understand the cause of the conflict; Proffer a possible lasting intervention to the cause of the conflict; In resolving a conflict you must put into consideration the demand of those who initiated the conflict. In a situation where two different persons are affected in a conflict and one person is favored in the cause of resolution of the conflict such resolution may fail within a short time; Conflict resolution should be made open for people to give their opinion in making the final judgment; people's view/opinion should be accorded the necessary respect; and people should be given a new orientation on how to deal with conflicting situations.

3. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Various researches on personality conflict have endeavored to associate conflict to personal and organizational consequences. According to Dana (2001). Personality conflict has some opposing effects on the organization and the individual especially when not properly managed. Where conflict is temperate, it becomes functional and encourages conversation. This encourages achievement of corporate goal and productivity. Conflict in some cases supports corporate performance by revealing divers opinion and different resolutions.

Conflict arises in organization due to advancement in knowledge, diversity in objectives, inadequate resources, over reliance on others, power tussle etc. This has a way of discouraging worker's determination and job satisfaction and thereby affecting employee performance. Quick acknowledgement of the conflict and proffering timely resolution to the motives of the conflict is very necessary. Discussion among the personalities involve in the conflict is the very imperative way to terminate the conflict whereas use of forceful methods will not yield a good result.

Darling & Fogliasso (1999), opined that "conflict cannot be absolutely exterminated in an organization. Business owners that attempt to eradicate conflict might not survive but those who try to give a good attention in dealing with conflict will enjoy the organizational profits of conflict. The ability of an organization to lessen the bad side of conflict and stimulate the good side will go a extensive way to calm tension in the work environment. The dynamic nature of organizations makes conflict rampant in the society. Conflict has the capacity to highly affect the performance of the organization. Good managers know that perfect control of conflicting situation is instrumental to maintaining the existing state of affairs in an organization.

Managers must toll the methodology of conflict resolution to minimize it undesirable influence on the business. Conflict should be given quick and amicable attention so as to have a good working atmosphere between the business owners and the members of staff in an organization. It is not out of place to say that conflict is an unavoidable occurrence in an organization. In handling conflicts, organizations must create relevant opportunity for taking decision. Staff benefit should be given proper attention. Organization must avoid gossip and should ensure proper method of sending information. Division of labour method should be applied and authority properly delegated.

Personality based conflict does no good to either the individuals or the organization because the contention is often driven by the feeling of ego and feeling of personality superiority. It is seldom settled, but when resolved, it does not ultimately advance gainful interest to the organization, as the case with task and process based conflicts. Personality based conflicts are mostly triggered by an organization with highly politicized climate and failure of leadership in interpersonal relations management. Personality based conflicts lingers, and are often known to be dysfunction ally destructive. It bears such coloration as mistrust, distrust, acrimony, rancor, hatred, high workplace, politicization, internal cultism segregation etc, which combine to frustrate organization focus.

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