

Communication and Leadership

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Abstract: Organizational conflict is inevitable; however, all conflicts are not destructive. Some scholars consider it as an essential aspect of organizations while some take it as debilitating outcomes of malfunctioning. Nonetheless, savants are unanimous that conflicts should be managed properly so as to retain them under acceptable limits. There are various theoretical underpinnings of the concepts of conflict and conflict management.

Introduction

This paper elaborates traditional, interactionist, and managed-conflict view of the notion. The traditional view considers all conflicts to be harmful and arising out of managers' sluggishness, lack of communication or so. Managed-conflict view vindicates that conflicts may prove beneficial for individual and organizational development if they are properly channelized. Interactionist view holds that ongoing conflicts, to an extent, are significant for organizations. Firms sans conflicts become static and irresponsive in the long-run.

Having focused on these three approaches, the author has highlighted the importance of conflict, communication, and leadership for employees and the management. The elaborate explanation is done for the purpose of accentuating differences and similarities in these three theoretical approaches. Scholarly and educational sources have been referred to substantiate the arguments.

Keywords: conflict, conflict management, traditional, conflict-managed, interactionist

What are the differences among the traditional, interactionist, and managed-conflict views of conflict?

The Traditional view

The earliest view of organizational conflict is known as the traditional view and it was invented between the 1930s and the 1940s. The view is the simplest and most linear method of dealing with conflicts. The traditional view of conflict explains that all organizational conflicts are completely harmful, bad and negative. Despite the fact that there are various categories of organizational conflicts, the traditional view explains that all conflicts are destructive and dysfunctional towards an organization and recommends that all organizational conflicts should be eliminated by looking for malfunctioning causes of such conflicts (Goetsch & Davis, 2014). According to the traditionalist view, the main causes of organizational conflicts are lack of responsiveness from managers, lack of communication, lack of trust, and disagreements. The traditional view advocates for the suppression of all types of conflict whether good or bad. For example, the traditional approach would view conflicts concerning administration procedures as dysfunctional regardless of the fact that positive things may occur as a result of such conflicts (Griffin & Moorhead, 2011).

Managed-conflict view

The managed-conflict view was dominant in the theme of organizational conflict in between the 1950s and the 1970s. The view came up during a time when the fields of organization behavior (OB) and management were expanding rapidly. The managed-conflict view emphasizes on the need to accept conflicts because conflicts are essential parts of organizations. Contrary to the traditional view, the managed-conflict view does not consider conflicts to be outright destructive, bad and harmful but instead the view shows that conflicts may benefit the individual employees, teams and the organization at large. According to Rahim (2015), the managed-conflict view asserts that organizational

conflicts within teams may improve the outcomes and performance of organizations. The managed-view conflict advocates for the management of all types of conflicts. For example, if there are conflicts in an organization concerning performance tradeoffs and professional opinions, the managed-conflict approach would view such conflicts as essential components of the organization and would recommend measures to solve such conflicts.

The interactionist view

The interactionist view on organizational conflict emphasizes the fact that conflicts are parts of organizations. The interactionist view argues that minimum and ongoing conflicts are essential and beneficial to groups and assets that those groups or organization that do not have conflicts become inadaptable, static, inflexible and non-responsive in the long term. According to the interactionist view, conflicts lead to competition, creativity and self-evaluation among employees (Dionysiou & Tsoukas, 2013). Accordingly, organizational conflicts increase the performance of groups and yield creative solutions to organization conflicts by promoting the best outcomes. The interactionist view emphasizes that the functional and constructive conflicts help organizations whereas destructive and dysfunctional conflicts ruin organizations. The interactionist view advocates the stimulation of beneficial conflicts in the organizations. For example, the interactionist approach would look for strategies to do away with dysfunctional organizational conflict such as human resource conflicts and encourage constructive conflicts such as cost and budget of projects because they will increase the financial efficiency in organizations (Pettigrew, 2014).

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