

## **CONFLICT AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION**

### **25.1 Introduction**

We often hear people saying, "There is a conflict in his mind", they have conflicting views," etc.; you yourself might have come across conflicting situations many a times. Have you ever thought what is a conflict, why do we have conflicts in life, how does it effect us or how can we manage a conflicting situation? Conflict is a part of every day life. This lesson provides a detailed discussion this topic.

### **25.2 Objectives**

After reading this lesson you will be able to :

- explain the term conflict;
  - elucidate the levels of conflicts;
  - describe the process and nature of intergroup conflicts;
  - recognize the causes and sources of intergroup conflicts;
  - explain the nature of prejudice and discrimination;
  - list the effects of intergroup conflicts;
  - state the strategies of intergroup conflicts:
-

### 25.3 What is Conflict

Like many of your friends who joined formal schools for completion of the secondary course, you also might have desired to join a formal school. What was your state of mind while joining the NOS ? Weren't you struggling to decide what to do ?

Think of the following situations

1. You have prepared well for Senior Secondary examination of the NOS and at the same time when you are having psychology paper your sister is getting married. You want to attend the marriage but you cannot afford to lose your examination. What will be your state of mind ?
2. You receive appointment letters from two organisations simultaneously for equally good jobs. What will be your state of mind ?
3. You are the member of one of the two groups of your colony. Your group is working to open a recreational club for the residents. What will be your state of mind if the other group starts a recreational club just before the innauguration of your club ?

In all the above situations your mind will be struggling and there will be breakdown in the standard mechanism of decision making. This is what is called conflict.

\* Conflict is a struggle to decide between incompatible or opposing needs, wishes, ideas, interests or people.

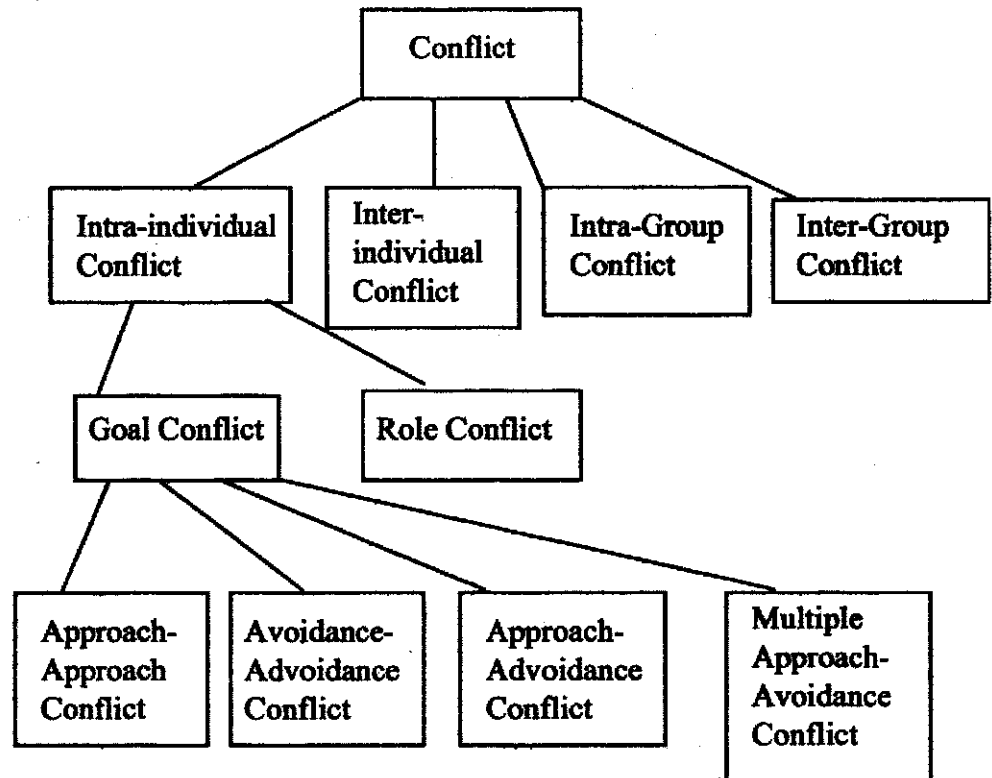
### 25.4 Levels of Conflict

Conflict can take place in many situations ranging from individual to group. In terms of the levels of conflict we may classify conflicts into the following categories.

- I. Intra-individual Conflict
- II. Inter-individual Conflict
- III. Intra-group Conflict
- IV. Inter-group Conflict

## I. Intra Individual Conflict

When an individual is confronted with a problem in decision making for himself it is called intra-individual conflict.



It is of two types :

- a) Goal Conflict
- b) Role Conflict

### (a) Goal Conflict

Goal conflict occurs when a person is forced to choose between two goals, where the attainment of one goal excludes the possibility of attaining the other.

**Example** : If you are tossing a coin you have to choose the head or the tail. You cannot have both.

Goal conflict is categorised into four forms.

- i. Approach - Approach Conflict
- ii. Avoidance - Avoidance Conflict
- iii. Approach - Avoidance Conflict
- iv. Multiple Approach- Avoidance conflict.

**(i) Approach - Approach Conflict**

It is a conflict between two positive goals that are equally attractive.

Eg. - The conflict which you will face when you want to attend the birthday party of a friend and a family party, both being celebrated at the same time.



*Approach - Approach Conflict*

**(ii) Avoidance - Avoidance Conflict**

This form of conflict involves two negative goals.

Eg : Do a job which you entirely dislike or take the chance of losing the income.

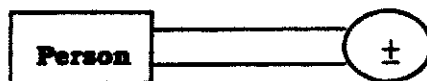


*Avoidance - Avoidance Conflict*

**(iii) Approach - Avoidance Conflict**

In this form of conflict the person is both attracted and repelled by the same goal object.

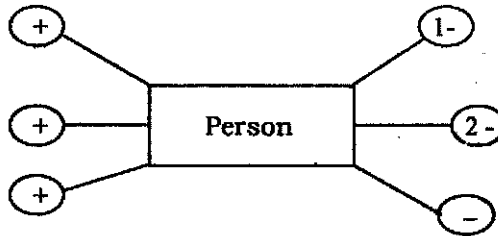
Eg : You may like to ask some one for a favour but you also have the fear that he may insult you or turn you down.



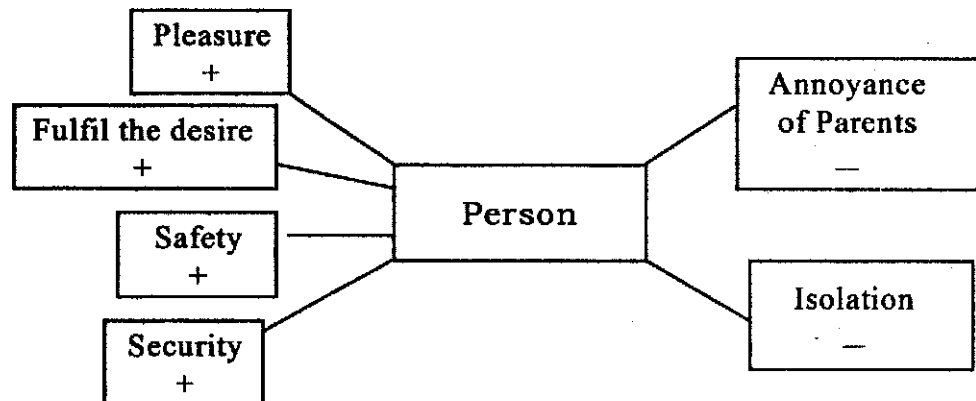
*Approach - Avoidance Conflict*

**(iv) Multiple approach - avoidance conflict**

In this conflict several positive and negative goals are involved.



Eg. - Suppose you want to get married to a person for whom your parents do not agree. Then the conflict faced by you is multiple approach - avoidance conflict. The marriage has several attractions for you like fulfilling, your desire and bringing stability and security. But the marriage is repellent to you because your parents will get annoyed and you may be isolated.



**(b) Role Conflict :**

Here the conflict is because of the need of an individual to play several roles simultaneously but finding time and resources inadequate.

Example : You are required to play the role of a son or a daughter, father, mother, brother or sister a worker in office a member of your club a student of the NOS husband or wife and many other roles. Simultaneously and you do not have time to play all the roles satisfactorily. The conflict faced by you is a role conflict.

---

**Intext Questions 25.1**

---

Fill in the blanks :

1. Conflict is \_\_\_\_\_ in the standard mechanism of decision making.
-

2. \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ are two types of intraindividual conflicts.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ is a conflict between two positive goals that are equally attractive.
4. In \_\_\_\_\_ conflict the person is both attracted and repelled by the same goal object.
5. In \_\_\_\_\_ conflict several positive and negative goals are involved.

---

## II. Inter-individual Conflict

Interindividual Conflict is the conflict between two individuals. It arises because of difference in perception, temperament, personality, value system, sociocultural factors, role ambiguities and clash of ego states.

Eg. : Conflict between two friends over a tumbler containing some (50%) water. One friend saying that it is half filled and the other saying that it is half empty.

## III. Intra-Group Conflict

Intragroup conflict is the conflict between two individuals who are the members of the same group.

Eg. : Politicians having conflict with their own party members.

## IV. Inter-group Conflict

Inter-group conflict is the conflict between two groups.

Eg. : Conflict between two groups of different religion.

Inter-group conflict has a special significance because we encounter this type of conflict in our day-to-day life. It occurs at various levels of our existence and in various situations in schools colleges, offices, politics and even in residential colonies.

There can be many reasons for conflicts. Consequences can also be both negative and positive as per modern theories. Negative consequence may

---

range from a simple quarrel to a big war. A detailed discussion on the topic will help you in understanding it thoroughly. In this lesson the intergroup conflict is explained with reference to the office situation. Let us begin with the nature and process of inter-group conflict.

### **25.5 Nature and Process of Inter-group Conflict**

Nature and process of inter-group conflict can be understood by a simple example of two groups. Let us name these groups a 'A' and 'B'. Both these groups are working in a research centre. 'A' is looking after the research work and 'B' is looking after publication.

Once 'A' has done some important research and send it to group 'B' for publication.

Group 'B' has brought out the reesearch thesis but did not put the names of group members of group 'A'.

There can be two reasons for this

Reason i. Group 'B' wants to insult or look down upon group 'A'.

Reason ii. Group 'B' forgot to put the names of group 'A' members.

In any case the conflict is latent at this stage because group 'A' did'nt observe the fact. After some time group 'A' has percieved it (Conflict could have been remained latent if group 'A' had not perceived the problem negatively). This stage is called percieved conflict. Now group has started feeling that group 'B' has deliberately avoided the names. This stage is felt conflict. Group 'A' then not only asked group 'B' to give explanation but also complained to the higher authorities against group B. Thus conflict has started between the two groups.

The authorities then made group 'B' to reprint the thesis with the names. Though the problem is solved temporarily, the conflict remained between these two groups.

Inter-group conflict is a process which build up gradually in five steps. These steps are :

1. **Latent Conflict** : When conflict promoting conditions are there in one group but it is not perceived by the other group. Some times latent conflict ends with out perception of the other group.
  2. **Perceived Conflict** : In this step the conflict is perceived by the opposite group. Some times a group can perceive conflicting situations even if the other group is not promoting such conditions.
-

3. **Felt Conflict** : When one group feels that there is conflict.
4. **Manifested Conflict** : When there is not only recognition or acknowledgment but also manifestation of conflict by overt and covert behaviour.
5. **Conflict Aftermath** : It is the outcome of the conflict. The outcome may be win, lose or compromise

## 25.6 Causes of Inter-group Conflict

1. **Competition for Scarce Resource** ; When the conflict arises due to competition over limited resources.  

Eg. : Both the groups want to open a petrol bunk, but the license will be given to only one group.
2. **Task Interdependence** : If the two groups depend on one another.  

Eg. : If both the groups are assigned the work of organising an exhibition together, since the tasks are interdependent, a conflict may arise if anything goes wrong.
3. **Jurisdictional Ambiguity** : At times the conflict arises when it is not clear which group is responsible for which activity. Again we can take the example where the two groups are assigned the responsibility of organising an exhibition. If the tasks are not allocated specifically, there can be confusion which may lead to a conflict.
4. **Competitive Reward System** :  

If both the groups are working towards the accomplishment of some task and if one group is rewarded for the performance, a conflict may arise.
5. **Status Struggle** :  

If one group attempts to improve its status and other group views this as a threat, conflict may arise.

## 25.7 Prejudice and Discrimination

### Prejudice :

Prejudice is a negative attitude towards the members of a specific group based solely on their membership in those groups. Caste, gender,

religion, society and geographical distances can be the basis of prejudice.

**Discrimination :**

Prejudice often leads to discrimination. Discrimination is the behaviour of treating a person or group in an unfavourable or unfair way.

Eg. : In some families the parents discriminate between sons and daughters.

Prejudice can be the cause of conflict and in some cases it may be the outcome of a conflict.

Let us take the example of group 'A' and group 'B' again to understand. Prejudice as a cause of conflict and Prejudice as consequence of conflict.

**(i) Prejudice as cause of conflict.**

Group 'B' has prejudices against group 'A' that the research people do not do any work in the office and they just get the data and publish it on their name. Due to this prejudice they did not put the names of group 'A' in the publication. So the prejudice was the cause of conflict.

**(ii) Prejudice as consequence of conflict**

Group 'A', has after this incident, developed prejudice against group 'B' that they do not work properly. Thus the prejudice is the outcome of the conflict in this situation.

---

**INTEXT QUESTIONS 25.2**

---

Fill in the blanks :

1. Conflict between two individuals is \_\_\_\_\_
  2. \_\_\_\_\_ is the conflict between two individuals who are the members of same group.
  3. Conflict between two groups is called \_\_\_\_\_
  4. \_\_\_\_\_ , \_\_\_\_\_ , \_\_\_\_\_ , \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ are the five steps in the process of inter-group conflict.
  5. \_\_\_\_\_ is the negative attitude towards the members of specific group based solely on their membership in those groups.
-

## 25.8 Process Involved in Intergroup Conflict

1. There is a clear distinction and comparison between we (the in group) and they (the out group).
2. Members of each group pull together to present a solid front i.e. cohesion in the group increases.
3. Members of the out group are viewed as enemy rather than as neutrals.
4. The groups overestimate their own strength and underestimate the strength of the members of the other group.
5. When a group loses in a conflict, the cohesion of the group members decreases and intra-group conflict may also start.
6. The inter-group conflict is the product of group intervention. And it happens with normal and well adjusted people.

## 25.9 Effect of Inter-group Conflict

In everyday life, the term conflict has strong negative connotations. It seems to imply anger, hostile and damaging behaviour. In fact, conflict leads to certain positive outcomes also. There can be healthy conflict between two departments in an organisation. Depending upon why it occurs and how it develops, it can yield beneficial as well as harmful effects.

### (I) Positive Effects of Conflict

1. It provides an individual a chance to think again or undertake introspection.
2. It seeks clarification and generates search behaviour.
3. It leads to innovation and change.
4. It energises the group members and helps them to test their capacities.
5. Unity is developed even in heterogeneous groups.
6. Group loyalty and team spirit increases.
7. It gives challenge and increases motivation. Both the groups monitor one another's performance, hence both the groups improve their performance and strive to attain higher level of excellence.

8. Conflict stimulates interest and creativity and adds to the fun of working with others.

(ii) **Negative Effects of Conflict**

1. It often produces strong negative emotions and can be stressful.
2. When conflict does not lead to the solution of a problem, it is unproductive and the investment of time and effort goes waste.
3. It interferes with communication between individuals or groups, and leads to enmity with the members of other group.
4. Sometimes it may divert attention from major task or goal and energies are wasted for small things.
5. The group leader may shift from participative to authoritarian styles which spoils a pleasant work environment.
6. Conflict increases the tendency of both sides to engage in negative stereotyping.

---

**INTEXT QUESTIONS 25.3**

---

Fill in the blanks :

1. In inter-group conflict there is a clear distinction and comparison between \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.
  2. \_\_\_\_\_ increases in the group to present a solid front.
  3. Inter-group conflict has both \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ effects
- 

**25.10 Resolution of Intergroup Conflict**

There are many techniques which can help in resolving the inter-group conflict. Some of them are given below.

1. **Dominance** : To eliminate the other party altogether without causing injury to self.
  2. **Avoidance** : In this technique the party or parties to the conflict may withdraw.
-

3. **Smoothing** : Here the differences between parties are disguised while similarities are highlighted. It enables the conflicting parties to realise that they are not much apart from the other.
4. **Compromise** : This approach forms a commonly used method to benefit all the parties in a conflict in one way or the other. Either the goal objective is divided among competing parties or one party provides somethings else to the other as exchange for the desired outcome.
5. **Hierarchical Decision Making** : A common superior can be requested to make a proper decision and use his authority to implement.
6. **Appeal Procedure** : Sometimes appeal to chance such as tossing a coin can be made to resolve a conflict by compelling the losers to withdraw from the situation.
7. **Problem Solving** : In this technique both the parties try to find a solution that reconciles or integrates the need of both the parties. Both the parties work together to define the problem and to identify mutually satisfying solutions.
8. **Bargaining and Negotiation** : Both the parties recognise their mutual dependence and work together satisfying to resolve conflict.

### 25.11 Outcomes of Conflict Resolution :

Conflict resolution results into any of the three situations.

- a. Win - win situation : Here both the parties win.
- b. Win - lose : Here one party wins and the other lose.
- c. Lose - lose : Here bothe parties lose. The best results is win-win situation.
- d. The best result is win-win situation.

---

#### INTEXT QUESTIONS 25.4

---

1. Name 4 various techniques which can help in resolving the inter-group conflict.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  2. What are the three situations in which conflict resolution results.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
-

### **Terminal Exercises**

1. Explain the term conflict.
2. What are the levels of conflict. Explain in detail.
3. Explain the nature and process of inter-group conflict.
4. What in your opinion is the most probable cause of inter-group conflict.
5. Explain the terms prejudice and discrimination.
6. In the earlier days it was thought that conflict is harmful. The modern perspective is different from this. Explain why.
7. What are the various techniques for the resolution of intergroup conflict ?

Dayal is the father of four children. He was raised in a hardworking labor class family. His needs for money and power were developed while he was growing up. Now he is working as a low paying assistant in a large company. In addition to bringing up the children he has to look after his parents. On the pay day he spends a lot of money on drinks. The next day he not only has a hangover but also feels sad because he knows that his wife cannot make both ends meet and his children will have to go without the basics of life.

- Q. Do you think the real problem of Dayal is pay. Why or why not ?
- Q Give the name of the role conflict involved in this case.

### **What Have You Learnt**

- Conflict is a state of mind. It is struggle to decide between incompatible or opposing needs, wishes, ideas, interest or people.
  - Conflict can be of various levels ranging from intra-individual conflict to inter-group conflict.
  - Inter-group conflict is of high significance and occurs at different levels of our existence.
  - Nature and process of inter-group conflict.
  - causes of inter-group conflict
  - Prejudice and discrimination as cause and effect of intergroup conflict.
  - Effect of inter-group conflict. As per modern theories inter-group conflicts can be positive also.
  - Resolution of inter-group conflict.
  - Outcomes of inter-group conflict.
-

## Key to Intext Questions

### 25.1

1. Breakdown
2. Goal and Role
3. Approach-Approach
4. Approach-Avoidance
5. Multiple approach-Avoidance

### 25.2

1. Intra-individual Conflict
2. Intra-group Conflict
3. Intra-group Conflict
4. Latent conflict, Perceived conflict, Felt conflict, Manifested conflict, conflict aftermath.

### 25.3

1. (We) the in group and (they) the out group.
2. Cohesion
3. Positive and negative.

### 25.4

1. Avoidance, Compromise, Problem Solving Negotiation.
2. Win-Win situation, Win lose, Lose-lose

## Hints to Terminal exercises

1. Conflict is struggle to decide between incompatible or opposing needs. Section 28.3
2. Intra-individual conflict, Inter-individual and inter-group conflicts (see section 25.4 for details)
3. Conflict builds up gradually in steps (for details see section 25.5)
4. Write on your own. See section 25.6 for reference.
5. Prejudice is an attitude of a person and discrimination is the corresponding behaviour (see section 25.7)
6. Conflict can give both negative and positive effects (see section 25.9)
7. There can be many ways by which conflict can be resolved. see section (25.10)

## Terms You Should Know

- Approach Approach conflict** : A need to choose between two positive in compatible goals.
- Approach Avoidance conflict** : A conflict in which the individual is both attracted and repelled by the some goal object.
- Avoidance Avoidance conflict** : A conflict in which the individual is repelled by both the goal.
- Charismatic Leaders** : Leaders who induce high levels of loyalty respect and admiration for themselves among their followers.
- Cohesiveness** : All forces acing on group members to cause them to remain part of a group; including mutual attraction, interdependence, shared goals and so on.
- Conflict** : Break down in process of dicision making.
- Conformity** : A form of social influence in which individuals change their attitudes or behaviours in order to adhere to existing social norms.
- Decision making** : The processes through which groups move toward consensus and reach dicisions.
- Discrimination** : learning in which an organism makes one response to one stimulus different response to different stimulus.
- Group** : Two or more personswho interact with one another, share common goals and recognize that they belong to a group.
- Informational Social Influence** : Social influence based on the desire to be correct (i.e., to possess accurate perceptions of the social world).
- Leadership** : The process through which leaders influence other group members toward attainment of specific group goals.
- Normative Social Influence** : Social influence based on the desire to be liked or accepted by other persons.
- Obedience** : A form of social influence in which one person simply orders one or more persons to perform some action (s).

- Prejudice** : An unjustified attitude fairly strong usually in an unfavourable direction.
- Social Influence** : Efforts on the part of one person to alter the behaviour or attitudes of one or more persons.
- Social norms** : Rules indicating how individuals are expected to behave in specific situations.
- Task inter dependence** : To achieve a goal, members of the group coordinate their activities.
-