

Advance Course in Social Psychology
Lecture 26: Conflicting Behavior- Part-III

Hello friends, welcome back. Today, I will continue my discussion with conflicting behavior. When we are talking about conflicting behavior in groups or in any organization, the foremost thing to mention is that conflict is ubiquitous in every group and organization. Here, ubiquitous, the term I have used pertains to that it is very much inevitable and but natural process of interaction that transforms into a conflict or disagreement in any organization or group. The most important thing apart from identifying its characteristics as ubiquitous process, it is also important to mention that conflict is of two categories. The first is intergroup, and the other is intra-group conflict.

If we talk about intergroup conflict, it is about conflict within the group itself that is members experience conflict, disagreement or dissonance with the other person's opinion, views and beliefs. And intergroup conflict means that two or more than two groups have conflict with each other based on shared norms and goals. That means when people do not share or disagree to share the common goals and attitudes, then definitely it leads to conflict. And there are certain conflicts if not resolved can be transformed and can take away different form in terms of severity.

So before discussing about different kind of conflicting behaviors, let us define that what is conflict. It is a feature common to every organization and it is one of the most complex phenomena studied by social scientist. Conflict can be separated into two categories. The first is intergroup in which distinct groups of individuals are at odds with one another. An intergroup conflict in which select individuals that are part of the same group clash with one another.

Although conflict has the ability as I mentioned just now to spiral upward in severity. If it is not resolved, then it will cumulate from one issue to another and the conflict becomes severe. Conflict is a ubiquitous concept and it is present in every organization and it is a never ending struggle for values that are much dear to members as power, autonomy or rewards. This conflict as a term can be in terms of related to task oriented goals, it can be related to emotions, it can be related to any functional aspect of any group goal. In social psychology as in the previous discussion also we discussed about discontinuity effect.

This effect when we are talking about pertaining to intergroup conflict, it is generally even more competitive and aggressive than individuals which we have discussed in our previous lecture. Whenever this effect is fading in any organization, then it leads to conflict else. If discontinuity effect is very much present in any organization or group, then members of the conflicting groups

can take some initiative to resolve the conflict and tend to suppress the disagreements and dissent among members. The two main sources of intergroup conflicts can be competition for valued sources or scarcity of resources and the other is social rewards like respect and esteem. When members do not receive respect and esteem and recognition from the higher authorities for their performance, then it leads to conflict.

It is an internal conflict, emotional conflict and whenever there is constraints or scarcity of resources within organizations to complete the task, then definitely again this leads to conflict because there is a tussle among members that who can gain maximum resources to perform their task. The two most important factors that leads to conflict or sources of conflict can be competition for valued material sources and social rewards such as respect and esteem. Besides this, the conflict can be described based on certain factors that what leads to conflict. The first is antecedent factors that what leads to conflict. It is scarcity of resources.

If the policies are not in consonance with the employees performances among or among individuals, any policy or procedure which is not in consonance with the employees, then definitely it leads to conflict between employee and the employer. It can be in the form of any union that when unions are formed in any organization, then how they represent their grievances to the higher authorities and higher authorities do not agree to what union members demand or they want to be acknowledged, then it leads to conflict and these factors can be a reason of conflicting behavior. The other is effective factors such as stress, tension, hostility and anxiety. Unable to receive certain resources to perform the task or scarcity of resources can lead to poor performances. This can lead to stress, it can lead to anxiety and sometimes it can lead to hostility.

Why hostility? When conflicts are not resolved amicably by the authorities, then it takes another upward spiral turn and it becomes severe or hostile. So, these are the effective factors leads to conflicting behavior. The other is cognitive factors. How we perceive the situation? That is perception and understanding of the conflicting situation. Whenever there is perception of dissonance in the environment, how people perceive, how they tend to interpret that information can also lead to conflicting behaviors.

So, we can broadly define that conflict can be defined as the breakdown of the standard mechanism of decision making. This is so obvious that when members are in conflict with each other or with the organization process and procedures, then there is a breakdown in the functionality of the group. Members are unable to focus on their task. Members fail to solicit all the support and resources from the organization to reach the shared goals and it leads to the breakdown of the mechanism. Here breakdown of the mechanism means functionality of any organization.

So, conflict broadly can be defined as a breakdown in the standard mechanism of decision making. Next comes stages of conflict. How any conflict aggravates? There can be any small issue, but if not resolved it can take a serious form or severe form. But how from one step to another conflict is created, it is felt and one has to experience that conflict. The first stage is latent conflict which is very much insidious in nature that any member would tend to perceive some conflict in the environment and they will not react or they will not even respond.

They will just feel and they will keep it within themselves. So, when we are talking about latent conflict, it is not manifesting. It is simply that people experience and they do not respond. The potential for conflict exists whenever people have different needs, values or interest and this is the latent conflict. Members are within the group.

They have different opinions with each other pertaining to their needs, shared goals, ideas, values and norms. But still they do not engage in any kind of conflicting behavior with the other members. But there is dissonance, there is some disagreement among members. So, whenever there is competition for scarce resources or drive for autonomy or power, then this kind of conflict is perceived with the system. May be we will not react, but dissonance is there.

Disagreement is there with the system pertaining to the norms, shared goals, scarcity of resources, but it is being experienced. It can be in the form of role conflict as well that what an individual is capable of doing so does not fit well with the role assigned to him. That is person job fit is not possible for one particular member and conflict is perceived. This conflict remains under the wraps. The person will not respond, but any one triggering event can manifest the conflict which is already latent.

That means latent which is not visible, but manifest which is actually visible or felt in the real situation. But the conflict can be apparent until a triggering event leads to the emergence or beginning of the obvious conflict. So, emergence may be followed quickly by settlement or resolution or it may be followed by escalation which can become very destructive. As soon as this conflict is expressed explicitly or it is very much apparent within the organization, that conflict can take a different form in terms of hostility which can lead to destruction or emergence or evolving of some different kind of counter work productive behaviors. This is latent conflict.

Next comes felt or personalized conflict. No doubt the conflict is apparent or it is latent, but at the same time conflict when it is felt it touches the human emotions in the group. This stage of conflict concentrates on emotions that what a person feels when he or she experiences any kind

of conflict in the group or any social situation. So, emotions come into play when any member experiences conflict or two parties are in conflict with each other. In other words people are aware that they have a conflict in the workplace and it contributes to feelings of tension, stress and anxiety.

Even any single member who is in conflict with the leader of the group then also it leads to some emotional play within the individual which leads to tension, stress and anxiety. So, once it is latent or it becomes apparent it is also being felt pertaining to the emotions of an individual. Manifest conflict if it is latent it is felt then definitely it also becomes apparent at a particular point of time. So, manifest conflict is a stage when two parties engage in behaviors that evoke responses from each other. In other words when two members or two conflicting groups are confronting each other then it evokes or triggers the group or the members and how they respond to that conflicting situation that is the manifest conflict.

So, these responses are open, aggressive, they are hostile, they can even sabotage that is causing harm, physical harm to any employee or to the property of the organization or they sometimes withdraw from the group itself. So, whenever any member is responding to the conflict in a very explicit manner in form of aggression, hostility, it can be verbal aggression or physical aggression or it can be sabotage or withdrawal then that conflict which is apparent is the manifest conflict. The fifth is conflict aftermath. This is the outcome of any conflict which remains unresolved and no cooperative foundation is laid off to resolve any conflict. So, the aftermath of a conflict may have a positive or negative repercussions if conflict is resolved amicably then the situation is cordial.

If it is not resolved amicably then definitely the consequences are negative in form of withdrawal, it can be in form of dissatisfaction or job dissatisfaction. So, if the conflict is generally resolved to the satisfaction of all the participants then a cooperative relationship can be laid off among the members that is the aftermath or the outcome of any conflict if resolved. But if not resolved then it can lead to negative consequences and may focus on later conflicts and not previously perceived and dealt with. That means the group can resolve the conflicts and can lay down a cooperative relationship among members while not focusing on the previous conflicts that has already existing. It is about diminishing the conflict levels among members and then creating a cordial environment.

But if not resolved then definitely the aftermath or the consequence is negative in form of hostility, in form of withdrawal, lack of commitment or job dissatisfaction. So, therefore, we can say that if the conflict is not resolved and is merely just suppressed which is again in form of unresolved conflict only then the latent conditions of conflict may be aggravated and explored in a more serious form and this type of episode that occurs in any situation out of the suppressed conflict is called as conflict aftermath. So, there are two situations in the last situation that is

conflict aftermath. If it is resolved it leads to cooperative relationship may be laid off and if it is not resolved then it can lead to dissatisfaction, lack of commitment or more aggression in hostility. But another situation is that if it is not resolved and is suppressed among members then in later stage it can become latent.

But in later stage it can also explode in a more serious form and which becomes impossible to rectify and this kind of situation which arises out of conflict only is termed as conflict aftermath. So, the idea is that whenever these stages of conflict occurs in any organization whether it is latent, it is felt, it is manifested or it is conflict aftermath or suppressed conflict should be resolved in its own stage. What level the conflict has been identified within the group or between the group? The conflict must be resolved with resolution strategies so that a cooperative relationship can be laid off among members and at any point when conflict is not resolved it has negative consequences or the conflict becomes latent and it explodes in a more serious form. Next is what are the sources of conflict? There has to be some reasons that why conflict has evolved in any organization. So, social scientists have identified some different sources of conflict such as process or dysfunctional conflict, task or substantial or functional conflict, personal and effective conflict.

So, let us discuss about the first source of conflict that is process conflict. This refers to disagreement over the methods and procedures adopted to complete a task and it occurs when strategies, policies and procedures clash. In what manner any job has to be performed when there is no agreement among the group members then it leads to process or dysfunctional conflict. Related to policies and procedures, related to any methodology that how the task will be performed or how the decision has to be taken up in purview of available resources when members are not in agreement with each other then it leads to process or dysfunctional conflict and such type of conflict creates a state of suspicion or trust. People fail to trust each other, distrust they fail to trust each other and they try they have doubt on each other that why the resources are not being used fully or in a very optimum level.

It leads to increase turnover in tension as we have discussed previously it leads to tendency of withdrawal among members when conflicts related to process are aggravated in any organization it leads to role ambiguity that is very obvious outcome of process conflict that whenever members are not in agreement related to the process of performing the task then there is a kind of ambiguity among members. They are not aware that what exactly they have to perform and there is a kind of role conflict or ambiguity among members and at the same time when these conflict takes a different form or it is increased in negative form then the range of negative behavior spans from insurrection to schism. Here these are the intense or extreme forms of conflicting behaviors that how people respond to this process conflict. So here insurrection means open revolt people become openly very aggressive verbally aggressive they tend to revolt or it can be in form of schism which means expressing at most discord or disunion or a formal breach of agreement

among members. So the consequence of process or dysfunctional conflict if not resolved can lead to extreme consequences in terms of insurrection to schism.

Next is task or functional conflict this conflict arises when intra group members disagree on issues that are relevant to meeting shared goals effective groups and organizations make use of this conflicts to make plans foster creativity solve problems and resolve misunderstandings. How members will perform the task this also can lead to task conflict or functional or substantial conflict. Whenever people have disagreements related to shared goals only shared goals then this kind of conflicts evolve in any group or organization. But generally people try to resolve these kind of conflicts member try to resolve these conflicts because some problems or ambiguity is been experienced in meeting the shared goals and how people all together come together to resolve these conflicts in a very amicable manner. So whenever these kind of conflicts are experienced in any group it has its certain advantages at the same time.

First of all it provides an opportunity to release tension for example ambiguity a person who is experiencing role ambiguity regarding his job then the person is experiences freedom in expressing his tension that how the task will be performed when I am not clear about my job role. So the person is able to release tension it compels an individual towards the right decision making to meet the shared goals the members and the leaders are compelled to indulge in decision making process it encourages innovation creativity through problem solving. Since the members have shared goal the target to be achieved is shared by each and every member every member tend to engage in problem solving strategies to resolve the problem and meet the shared goal it makes the group more cohesive since everybody is attached emotionally attached to the common goal of the group it makes the group members more cohesive and try to put more exert more exertion and effort to resolve the problem and meet the goal. And last it helps in identifying the weaknesses of the group once the group fails to perform or reach the shared goal then at the same time they tend to resolve that conflict that arises because of certain factors and they also tend to identify the weaknesses of their own group members so that the goal can be achieved in a very amicable fashion. So this is task conflict which has its own advantages as well this is personal or effect conflict personal conflicts also known as effective conflicts or personality conflict emotional conflict or relationship conflict these are the conflicts that occur when group members dislike one another for example, criticism when one person evaluates another or his or her work negatively is one common cause of personal conflict it is completely based on social interaction that occurs in any group or within group and how people tend to interact and respond to other members it can be in form of criticism it can be in form of expressing the behavior of creating obstructions for the other person or it can be in form of resolving emotional conflicts by creating amicable relationship with the other person.

But at the same time when these kind of emotional conflicts or personal conflicts are not resolved it is a threat to an individual's well being where the person experiences lack of acceptability within

the group, lack of growth or personal growth within the group and at the same time there is lack of autonomy and mastery in the environment. Whenever these kind of lackings are being experienced then this leads to personal or effective conflict. Next comes the positive aspects of conflict as I mentioned that if task conflict is experienced in the work places or within the group then how it has some disadvantages as well but on the whole whenever any conflict is experienced in any group then there are certain advantages of those conflicts. The first is it provides an opportunity for releasing the tension which otherwise would remain suppressed because when the conflict explodes every member responds and they tend to release their tension. They foster problem solving with adopting a course of action since every member is part of the group and they want to experience the membership of the group in long run they also engage in problem solving strategies.

The linking process followed by the conflict may lead to innovations in policies and procedures and change in behaviors. When resolving the conflict and involving in the process of resolving the conflict members come up with novel schemes, policies and procedures so that the conflict should not evolve in future. So, this leads to some novelty in the work procedures it makes a group more cohesive as member cooperates to meet the pressure of the conflicting situation and helps in identifying the weaknesses in the system. Apart from this it has some more advantages that it is a test of the capacities of individuals and groups. The point is that whenever conflict is experienced within the group members tend to push their boundaries to a larger extent where they come up with more ideas, more novelty and this enhances their capability to solve the problems and come out with better solutions it provides challenges to the group members and members feel highly motivated and satisfied.

Conflict is the appearance of differences and is also reflection of the presence of diversity in human interaction. Maybe people are interacting and they experience conflict with each other, but deep down even the counter argument also carries some kind of novelty or diversity in the interaction that fosters more innovation within the group itself. So, it is in itself a positive side of any conflict that there is so much of diversity in the interactions when members have conflict with the other members of the group and most importantly it is a source of socially functional forces and can secure social commitments. No doubt when two people or two members experience conflict with each other they tend to interact socially with the other members, they solicit support from the other members and they are more socially committed to the group on the overall basis.

So, these are the positive aspects of conflict. The negative aspect it may create a climate of suspicion and distrust, it may lead to propensity to intention to leave the organization that means, turn of intentions also increase or people tend to withdraw from those group patterns of behaviors. It is something that people desire to continue the membership of the group, but at the same time when conflict is suppressed or not resolved then people engage in some negative tendencies of leaving the organization. It may threaten the emotional well being of employees because it leads

to anxiety, it leads to stress, it leads to anxiety. It may lead to role ambiguity or role conflict when people are not in consonance with what they have to perform then it leads to role conflict or ambiguity and again it adds more to the conflict and it may range from insurrection or schemes that is intense revolt to intense discord or disunion with the other members. So that is all about defining conflict which involves types of conflict and stages of conflict along with its advantages and disadvantages.

I will continue the discussion in the next lecture. Thank you so much. Thank you very much.