

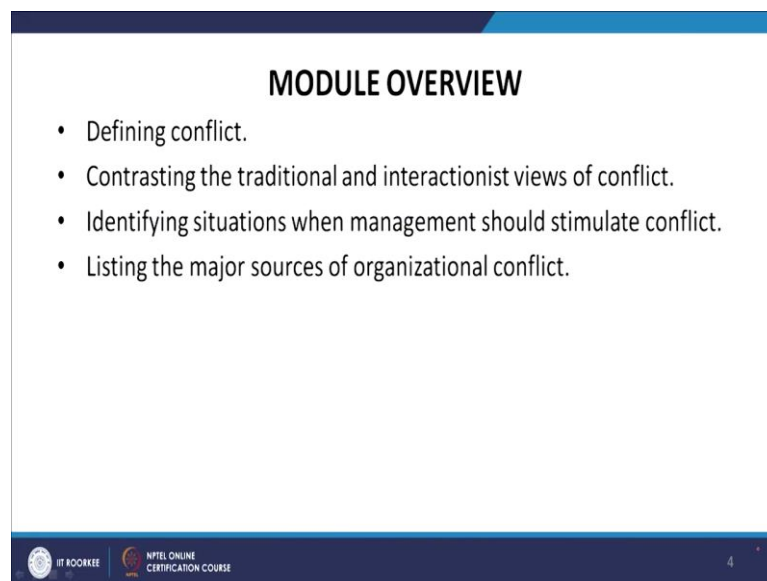
Organization Theory/Structure and Design
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Department of Management Studies
Indian Institute of Technology, Roorkee

Lecture - 35
Managing Organizational Conflict - 1

Welcome to module 35 of this course from Organization Theory Structure and Design. As you can see from this slide, these two modules, that is, module 35 and 36 will be covering managing organizational conflict.


So, let us start with module 35 and these are the things that we will cover in this module. First, we will start with defining conflict, after that we will talk about contrasting the traditional and interactionist views of conflict, identifying situations when management should stimulate conflict and then listing the major sources of Organizational Conflict.

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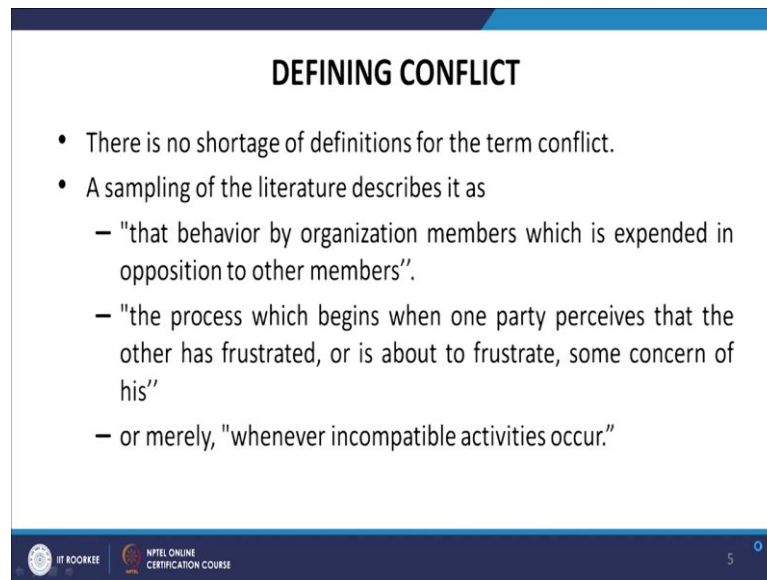
A presentation slide titled 'MODULE OVERVIEW' with a blue header and footer. The slide lists four bullet points: 'Defining conflict.', 'Contrasting the traditional and interactionist views of conflict.', 'Identifying situations when management should stimulate conflict.', and 'Listing the major sources of organizational conflict.' The footer contains the IIT Roorkee logo, the text 'NPTEL ONLINE CERTIFICATION COURSE', and the number '4' in a small red square.

MODULE OVERVIEW

- Defining conflict.
- Contrasting the traditional and interactionist views of conflict.
- Identifying situations when management should stimulate conflict.
- Listing the major sources of organizational conflict.



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DEFINING CONFLICT

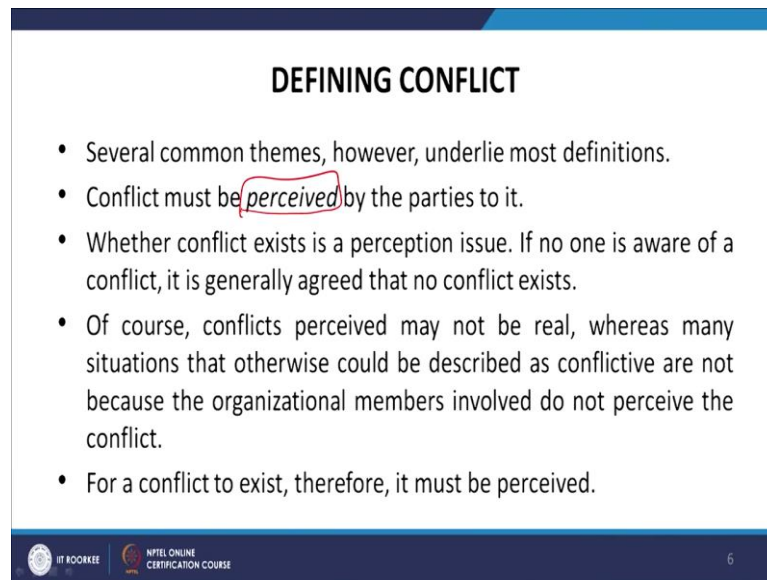
- There is no shortage of definitions for the term conflict.
- A sampling of the literature describes it as
 - "that behavior by organization members which is expended in opposition to other members".
 - "the process which begins when one party perceives that the other has frustrated, or is about to frustrate, some concern of his"
 - or merely, "whenever incompatible activities occur."

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To start with, let us define conflict. So, there is no shortage of definitions for the term conflict. A sampling of the literature describes it as- “that behavior by organization members which is expended in opposition to other members”. Another definition is “the process which begins when one party perceives that the other has frustrated, or is about to frustrate, some concern of his” and the third is merely, “whenever incompatible activities occur”.

Now several common themes, however, underlie most of these definitions. The first is conflict must be perceived by the parties to it. So, the first condition is that it should be perceived by the parties to it.

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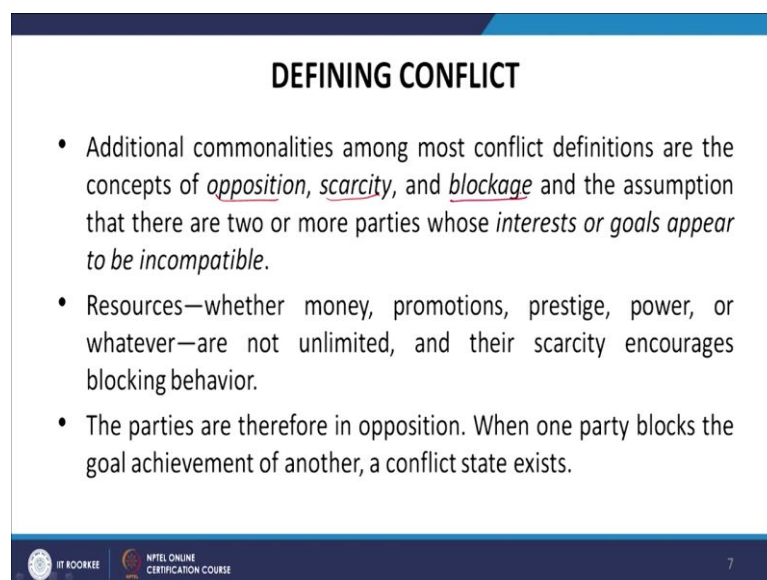
DEFINING CONFLICT

- Several common themes, however, underlie most definitions.
- Conflict must be perceived by the parties to it.
- Whether conflict exists is a perception issue. If no one is aware of a conflict, it is generally agreed that no conflict exists.
- Of course, conflicts perceived may not be real, whereas many situations that otherwise could be described as conflictive are not because the organizational members involved do not perceive the conflict.
- For a conflict to exist, therefore, it must be perceived.

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Whether conflicts exists, is a perception issue. If no one is aware of a conflict, it is generally agreed that no conflict exists. Of course, conflicts perceived may not be real, whereas many situations that otherwise could be described as conflictive are not because the organizational members involved do not perceive the conflict. For a conflict to exist, therefore, it must be perceived.

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DEFINING CONFLICT

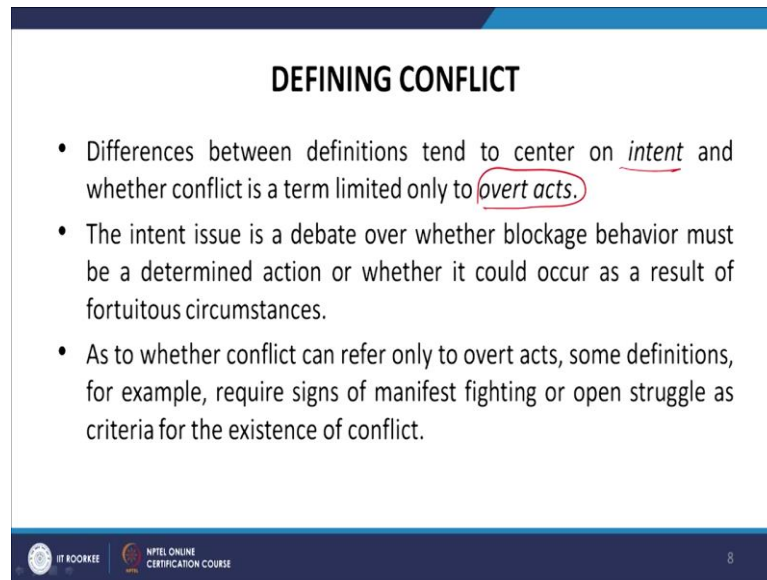
- Additional commonalities among most conflict definitions are the concepts of opposition, scarcity, and blockage and the assumption that there are two or more parties whose *interests or goals appear to be incompatible*.
- Resources—whether money, promotions, prestige, power, or whatever—are not unlimited, and their scarcity encourages blocking behavior.
- The parties are therefore in opposition. When one party blocks the goal achievement of another, a conflict state exists.

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Additional commonalities among most conflict definitions are the concept of opposition, scarcity, and blockage and the assumption that there are two or more parties whose

interests or goals appear to be incompatible. Resources- whether money, promotions, prestige, power, or whatever- are not unlimited, and their scarcity encourages blocking behavior. The parties are therefore in opposition. When one party blocks the goal achievement of another, a conflict state exists.

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DEFINING CONFLICT

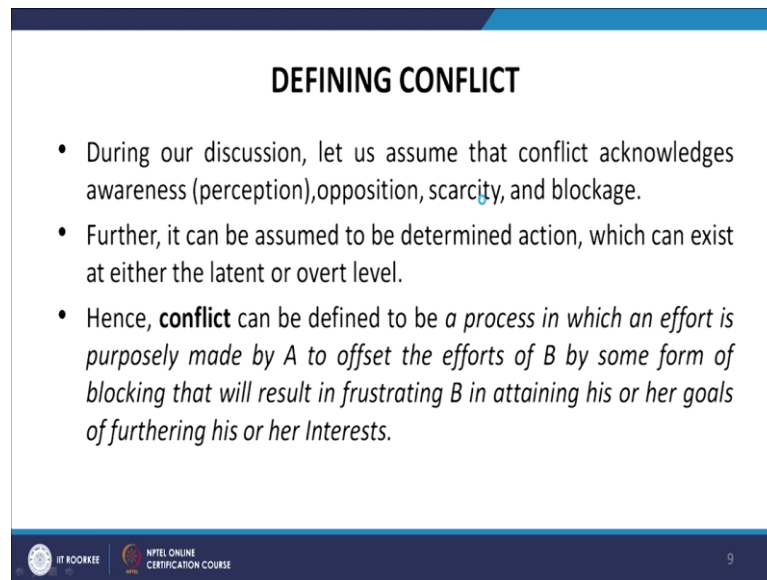
- Differences between definitions tend to center on intent and whether conflict is a term limited only to overt acts.
- The intent issue is a debate over whether blockage behavior must be a determined action or whether it could occur as a result of fortuitous circumstances.
- As to whether conflict can refer only to overt acts, some definitions, for example, require signs of manifest fighting or open struggle as criteria for the existence of conflict.

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Differences between definitions tend to center on intent and whether conflict is a term limited only to overt acts. The intent issue is a debate over whether blockage behavior must be a determined action or whether it could occur as a result of fortuitous circumstances.

As to whether conflict can refer only to overt acts, some definitions, for example, require signs of manifest fighting or open struggle as criteria for the existence of conflict. During our discussion let us assume that conflict acknowledges awareness, opposition, scarcity and blockage.

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The slide is titled "DEFINING CONFLICT" in bold black text. It contains three bullet points. The first bullet point states: "During our discussion, let us assume that conflict acknowledges awareness (perception), opposition, scarcity, and blockage." The second bullet point states: "Further, it can be assumed to be determined action, which can exist at either the latent or overt level." The third bullet point states: "Hence, **conflict** can be defined to be *a process in which an effort is purposely made by A to offset the efforts of B by some form of blocking that will result in frustrating B in attaining his or her goals of furthering his or her Interests.*" The footer of the slide includes the ITI ROORKEE logo, the text "NIFEL ONLINE CERTIFICATION COURSE", and the number "9".

DEFINING CONFLICT

- During our discussion, let us assume that conflict acknowledges awareness (perception), opposition, scarcity, and blockage.
- Further, it can be assumed to be determined action, which can exist at either the latent or overt level.
- Hence, **conflict** can be defined to be *a process in which an effort is purposely made by A to offset the efforts of B by some form of blocking that will result in frustrating B in attaining his or her goals of furthering his or her Interests.*

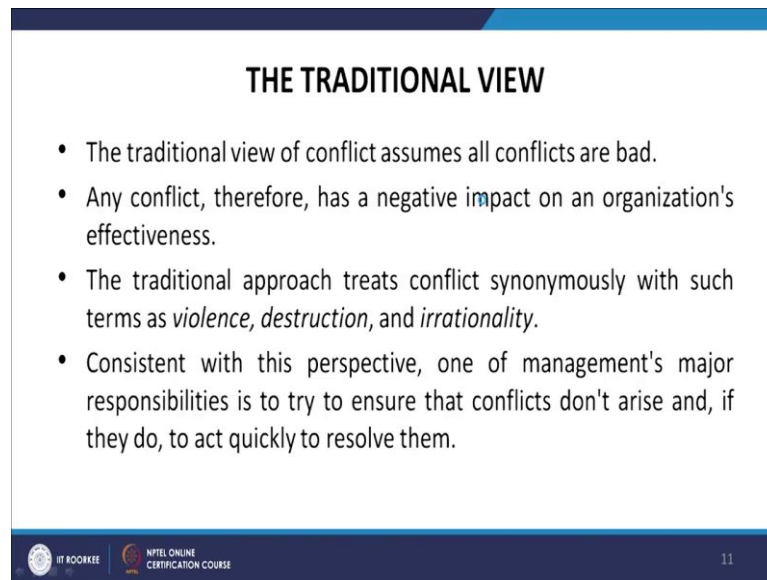
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Further, it can be assumed to be determined action which can exist at either the latent or overt level. Hence, conflict can be defined to be a process in which an effort is purposely made by A to offset the efforts of B by some form of blocking that will result in frustrating B in attaining his or her goals of furthering his or her interests.

Now, let us look at the relationship of conflict and organizational effectiveness. For most people, the term organizational conflict carries a negative connotation and effective organizations typically thought of as a coordinated group of individuals working towards common goals.

In this view, conflict would only hinder the coordination and team work necessary to achieve the organization's goals, but there is another view of conflict this one argues that conflict improves an organizational effectiveness by stimulating change and improving the decision making process.

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THE TRADITIONAL VIEW

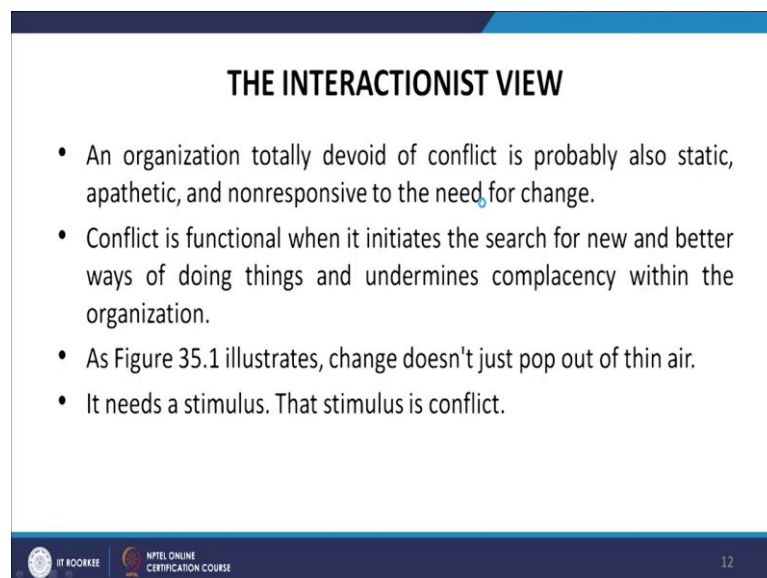
- The traditional view of conflict assumes all conflicts are bad.
- Any conflict, therefore, has a negative impact on an organization's effectiveness.
- The traditional approach treats conflict synonymously with such terms as *violence*, *destruction*, and *irrationality*.
- Consistent with this perspective, one of management's major responsibilities is to try to ensure that conflicts don't arise and, if they do, to act quickly to resolve them.

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Now, what is the traditional view? The traditional view of conflict assumes all conflicts are bad. Any conflict therefore, has a negative impact on an organization's effectiveness. The traditional approach treats conflict synonymously with such terms as violence, destruction and irrationality.

Consistent with this perspective, one of management's major responsibility is to try to ensure that conflicts do not arise and, if they do, to act quickly to resolve them. There is another view of conflict that is the interactionist view.

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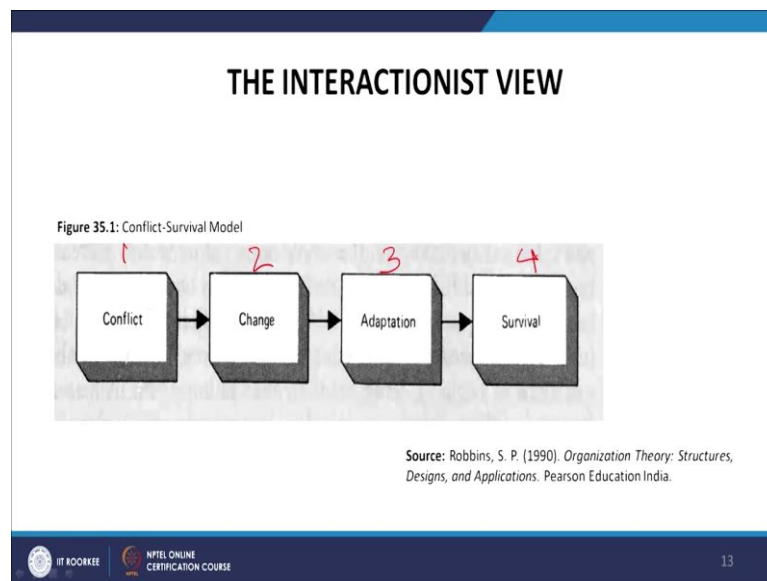
THE INTERACTIONIST VIEW

- An organization totally devoid of conflict is probably also static, apathetic, and nonresponsive to the need for change.
- Conflict is functional when it initiates the search for new and better ways of doing things and undermines complacency within the organization.
- As Figure 35.1 illustrates, change doesn't just pop out of thin air.
- It needs a stimulus. That stimulus is conflict.

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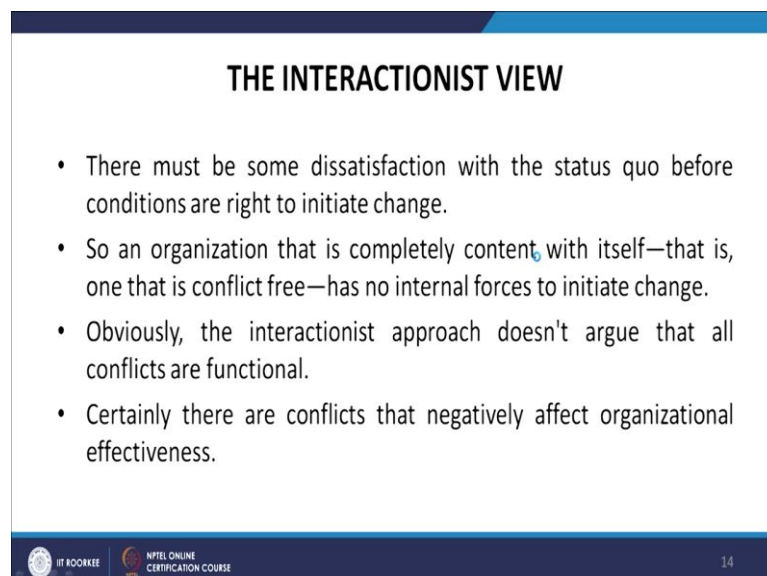
An organization totally devoid of conflict is probably also static, apathetic and nonresponsive to the need for change. Conflict is functional when it initiates the search for new and better ways of doing things and undermines complacency within the organization. In figure 35.1, we will illustrate that change does not just pop out of thin air. It needs a stimulus and that stimulus is conflict. So, this is figure 35.1 that talks about the conflict-survival model.

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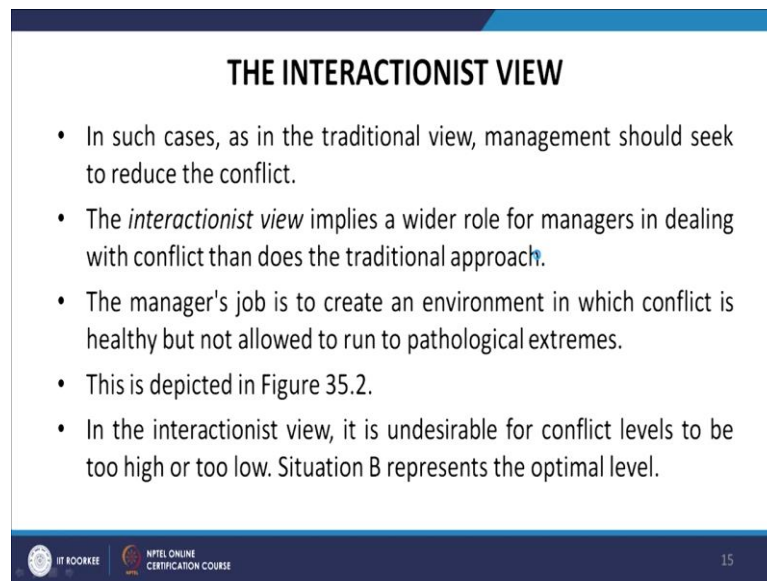
So, this is conflict, starts the change then comes adaptation and then it leads to survival.

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There must be some dissatisfaction with the status quo before conditions are right to initiate change. So, an organization that is completely content with itself- that is, one that is conflict free- has no internal forces to initiate change. Obviously, the interactionist approach does not argue that all conflicts are functional. Certainly, there are conflicts that negatively affect organizational effectiveness.

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THE INTERACTIONIST VIEW

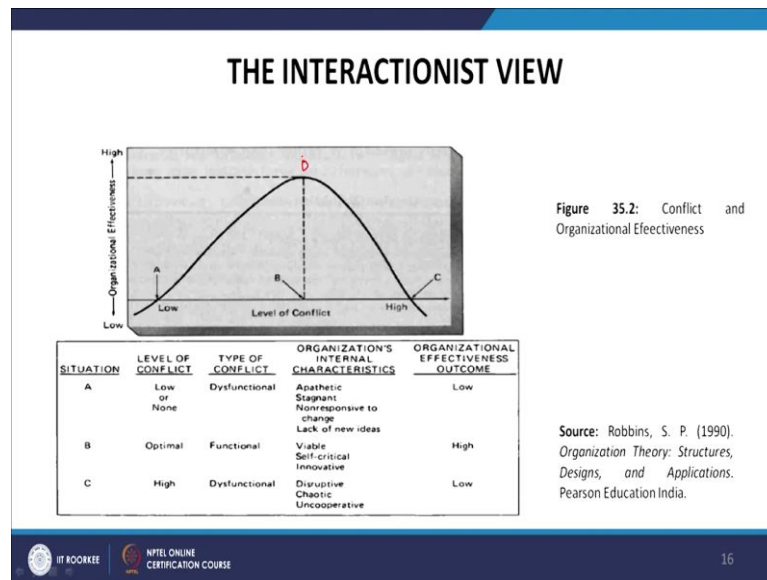
- In such cases, as in the traditional view, management should seek to reduce the conflict.
- The *interactionist view* implies a wider role for managers in dealing with conflict than does the traditional approach.
- The manager's job is to create an environment in which conflict is healthy but not allowed to run to pathological extremes.
- This is depicted in Figure 35.2.
- In the interactionist view, it is undesirable for conflict levels to be too high or too low. Situation B represents the optimal level.

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In such cases, as in the traditional view, management should seek to reduce the conflict. The interactionist view implies a wide role for managers in dealing with conflict than does that traditional approach.

The manager's job is to create an environment in which conflict is healthy, but not allowed to run to pathological extremes. This is depicted in figure 35.2. In the interactionist view, it is undesirable for conflict levels to be too high or too low. Situation B represents the optimal level.

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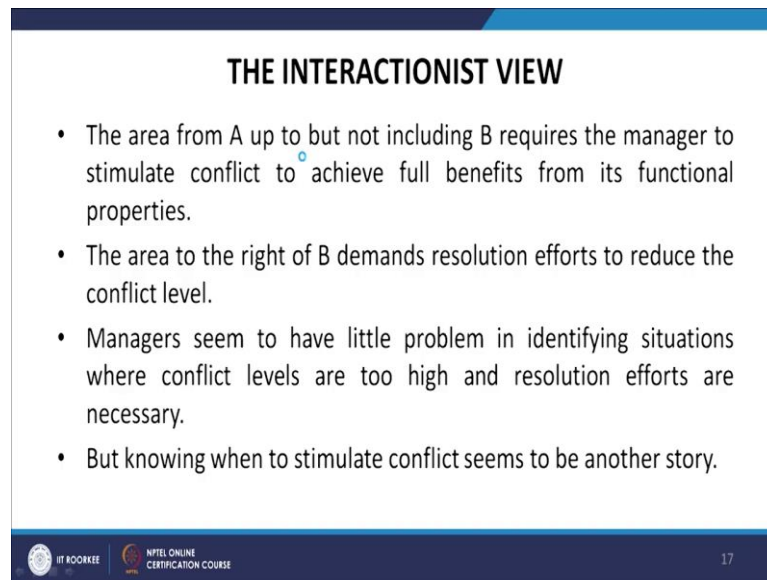


So, this is figure 35.2 and here we are talking of conflict and organizational effectiveness. So, now you see that on the X axis we have the level of conflict that varies from low to high. Low is point A and high is point C while on the Y axis we have organizational effectiveness, again it moves from low to high.

And now you can see that at this point where the level of conflict is medium, between low and high, that is, the point B that leads to the highest organizational effectiveness. So, now it is described in the table below. So, there are these three situations, A, B and C and the level of conflict in A is low or none, B, it is optimal and C, it is high. Now in situation A, this type of conflict is called as dysfunctional, at B it become functional and at C point it again becomes dysfunctional.

Now, what are the organization's internal characteristics at situation A? So, it is apathetic, stagnant, nonresponsive to change and it lacks new ideas. While in situation B, it is viable, self critical and innovative and situation C, they are disruptive, chaotic and uncooperative and in situation A, organizational effectiveness outcome is low as it is in C, but you can see that in situation B, it is high.

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THE INTERACTIONIST VIEW

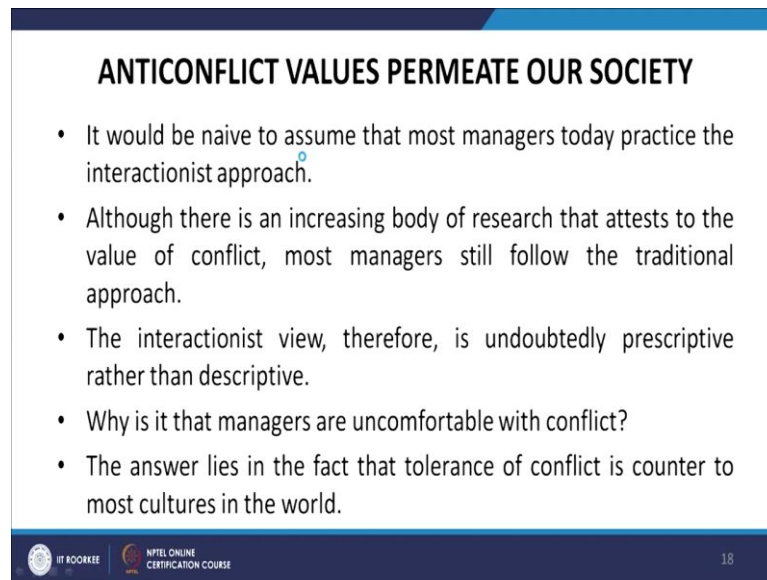
- The area from A up to but not including B requires the manager to stimulate conflict to achieve full benefits from its functional properties.
- The area to the right of B demands resolution efforts to reduce the conflict level.
- Managers seem to have little problem in identifying situations where conflict levels are too high and resolution efforts are necessary.
- But knowing when to stimulate conflict seems to be another story.

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The area from A, up to but not including B, requires the managers to stimulate conflict to achieve full benefits from its functional properties. The area to the right of B demands resolution efforts to reduce the conflict level.

Managers seems to have little problem in identifying situations where conflict levels are too high and resolution efforts are necessary. But knowing when to stimulate conflict seems to be another story. Now, let us look at how anticonflict values permeate our society. It would be naive to assume that most managers today practice the interactionist approach.

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ANTICONFLICT VALUES PERMEATE OUR SOCIETY

- It would be naive to assume that most managers today practice the interactionist approach.
- Although there is an increasing body of research that attests to the value of conflict, most managers still follow the traditional approach.
- The interactionist view, therefore, is undoubtedly prescriptive rather than descriptive.
- Why is it that managers are uncomfortable with conflict?
- The answer lies in the fact that tolerance of conflict is counter to most cultures in the world.

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Although there is an increasing body of research that attest to the value of conflict, most managers still follow the traditional approach. The interactionist view, therefore, is undoubtedly prescriptive rather than descriptive

Why is it that managers are uncomfortable with conflict? The answer lies in the fact that tolerance of conflict is counter to most cultures in the world. We are more susceptible to influence in the early years of our development.

From the time we reach an age of understanding through the primary school years, we have been inculcated with the value of getting along with others and avoiding conflicts. The home, school and religion are three major institutions that have reinforced anticonflict values during our developing years.

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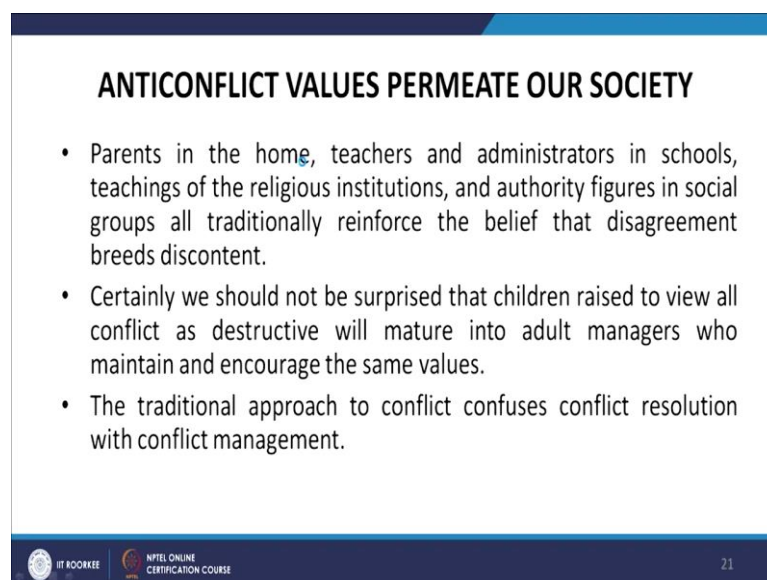
ANTICONFLICT VALUES PERMEATE OUR SOCIETY

- In addition, entire countries, such as India, have further fostered an anticonflict image by developing a national pride as a peace-loving nation.
- Multibillion-rupee expenditures are made each year for defense, not offense.
- Preparation to fight is made only because others may initiate force and therefore protection is justified.
- We live in a society that has been built upon anticonflict values.

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In addition, entire countries, such as India have further fostered an anti conflict image by developing a national pride as a peace-loving nation. Multibillion-rupee expenditures are made each year for defense not offense. Preparation to fight is made only because others may initiate force and therefore, protection is justified. We live in a society that has been built upon anti conflict values.

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ANTICONFLICT VALUES PERMEATE OUR SOCIETY

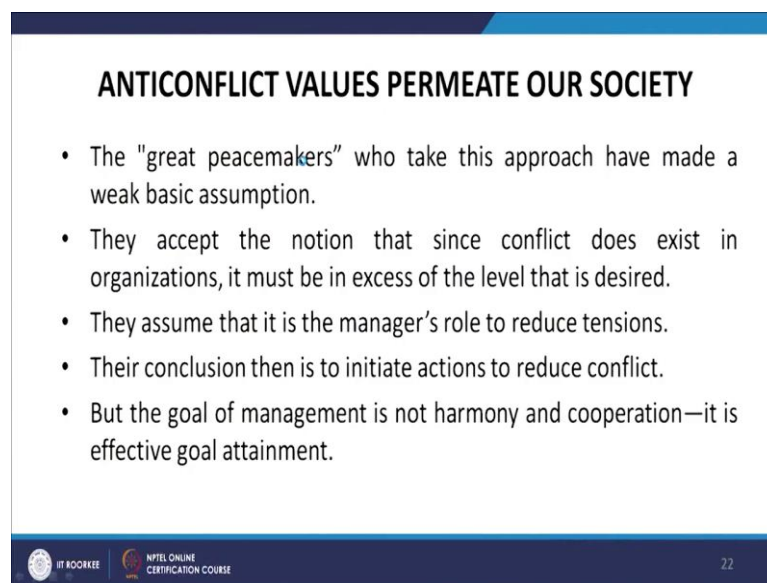
- Parents in the home, teachers and administrators in schools, teachings of the religious institutions, and authority figures in social groups all traditionally reinforce the belief that disagreement breeds discontent.
- Certainly we should not be surprised that children raised to view all conflict as destructive will mature into adult managers who maintain and encourage the same values.
- The traditional approach to conflict confuses conflict resolution with conflict management.

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Certainly, we should not be surprised that children raised to view all conflict as destructive will mature into adult managers who maintain and encourage the same values. The traditional approach to conflict confuses conflict resolution with conflict management.

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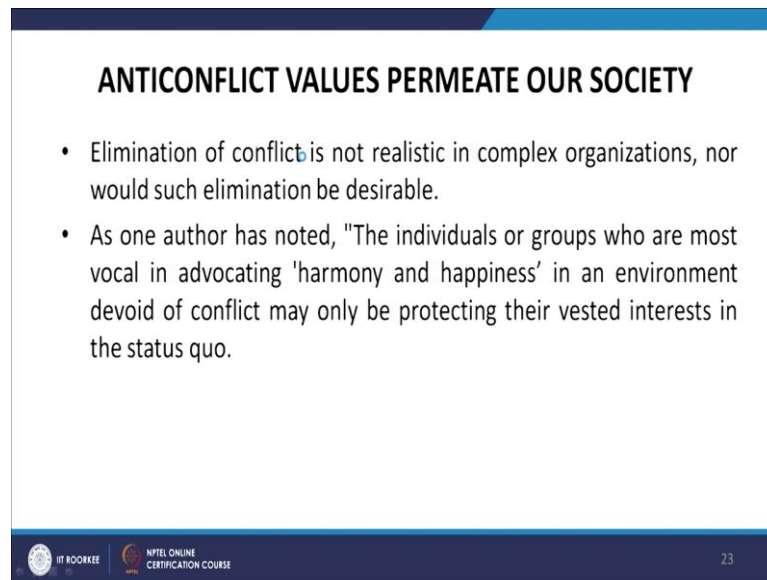
ANTICONFLICT VALUES PERMEATE OUR SOCIETY

- The "great peacemakers" who take this approach have made a weak basic assumption.
- They accept the notion that since conflict does exist in organizations, it must be in excess of the level that is desired.
- They assume that it is the manager's role to reduce tensions.
- Their conclusion then is to initiate actions to reduce conflict.
- But the goal of management is not harmony and cooperation—it is effective goal attainment.

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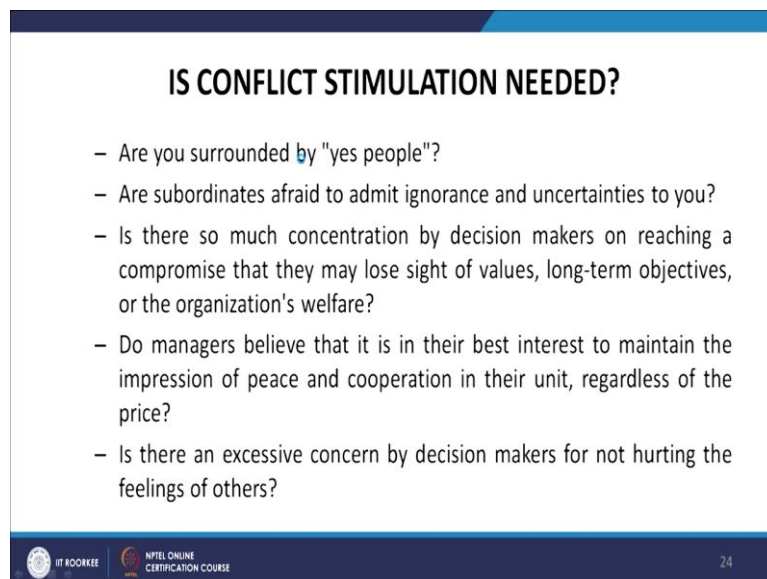
ANTICONFLICT VALUES PERMEATE OUR SOCIETY

- Elimination of conflict is not realistic in complex organizations, nor would such elimination be desirable.
- As one author has noted, "The individuals or groups who are most vocal in advocating 'harmony and happiness' in an environment devoid of conflict may only be protecting their vested interests in the status quo."

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Elimination of conflict is not realistic in complex organizations, nor would such elimination be desirable. As one author has noted, “The individuals or groups who are most vocal in advocating ‘harmony and happiness’ in an environment devoid of conflict may only be protecting their vested interests in the status quo.

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IS CONFLICT STIMULATION NEEDED?

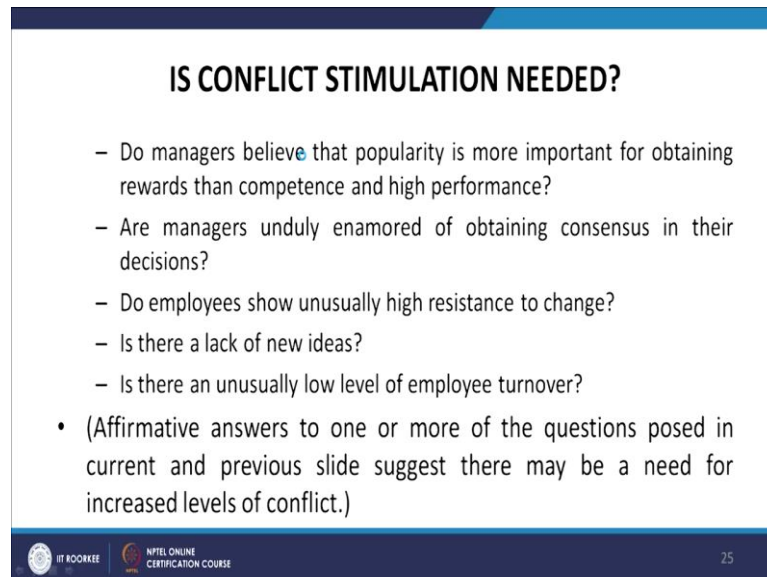
- Are you surrounded by "yes people"?
- Are subordinates afraid to admit ignorance and uncertainties to you?
- Is there so much concentration by decision makers on reaching a compromise that they may lose sight of values, long-term objectives, or the organization's welfare?
- Do managers believe that it is in their best interest to maintain the impression of peace and cooperation in their unit, regardless of the price?
- Is there an excessive concern by decision makers for not hurting the feelings of others?

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Now, let us try to answer another question: Is conflict stimulation needed? So, are you surrounded by “yes people”? Are subordinates afraid to admit ignorance and uncertainties to you? Is there so much concentration by decision makers on reaching and

compromise that they may lose sight of values, long-term objectives, or the organization's welfare? Do managers believe that it is in their best interest to maintain the impression of peace and cooperation in their unit, regardless of the price? Is there an excessive concern by decision makers for not hurting the feelings of others?

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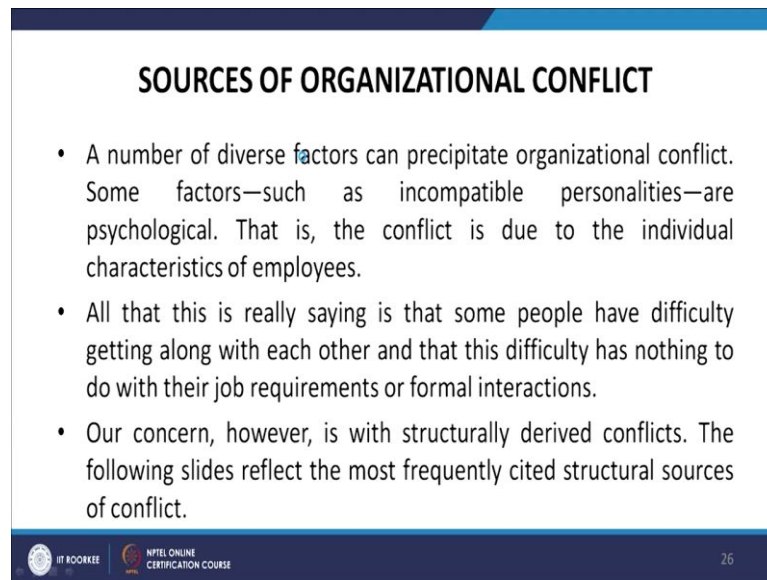
IS CONFLICT STIMULATION NEEDED?

- Do managers believe that popularity is more important for obtaining rewards than competence and high performance?
- Are managers unduly enamored of obtaining consensus in their decisions?
- Do employees show unusually high resistance to change?
- Is there a lack of new ideas?
- Is there an unusually low level of employee turnover?
- (Affirmative answers to one or more of the questions posed in current and previous slide suggest there may be a need for increased levels of conflict.)

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Do managers believe that popularity is more important for obtaining rewards than competence and high performance? Are managers unduly enamored by obtaining consensus in their decisions? Do employees show unusually high resistance to change? Is there a lack of new ideas? Is there an unusually low level of employee turnover? Now, affirmative answers to one or more of the questions posed in current and previous slide suggest that there may be a need for increased levels of conflict.

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SOURCES OF ORGANIZATIONAL CONFLICT

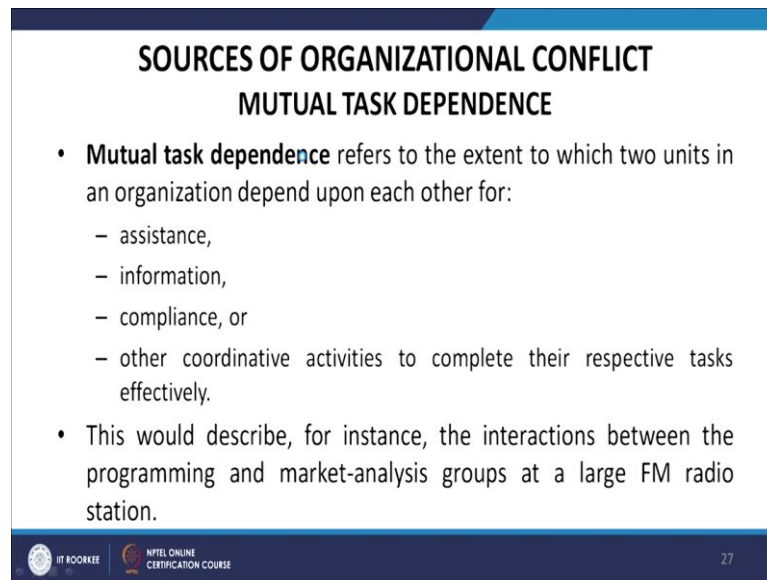
- A number of diverse factors can precipitate organizational conflict. Some factors—such as incompatible personalities—are psychological. That is, the conflict is due to the individual characteristics of employees.
- All that this is really saying is that some people have difficulty getting along with each other and that this difficulty has nothing to do with their job requirements or formal interactions.
- Our concern, however, is with structurally derived conflicts. The following slides reflect the most frequently cited structural sources of conflict.

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So, this brings up to the issue of what are the sources of organizational conflict. A number of diverse factors can precipitate organizational conflict. Some factors- such as incompatible personalities- are psychological. That is, the conflict is due to the individual characteristics of employees.

All that this is really saying is that some people have difficulty getting along with each other and that this difficulty has nothing to do with their job requirements or formal interactions. Our concern, however, is with structurally derived conflicts. The following slides reflect the most frequently cited structural sources of conflict.

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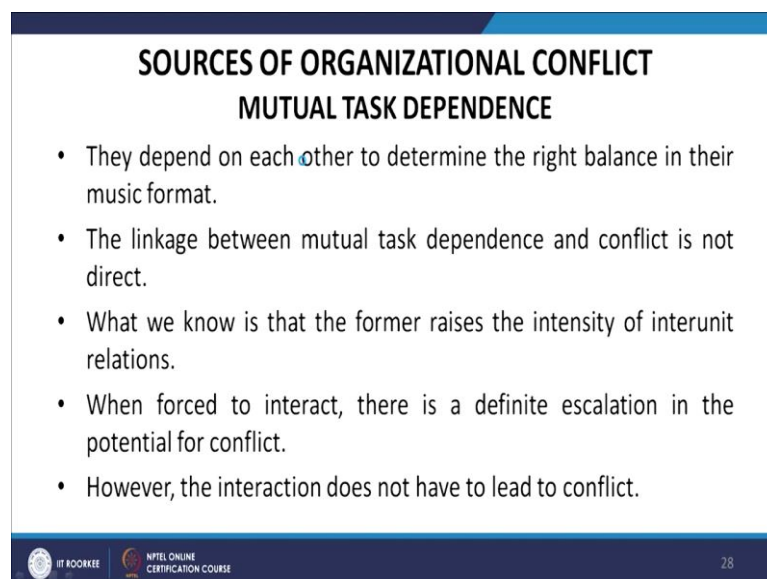
SOURCES OF ORGANIZATIONAL CONFLICT
MUTUAL TASK DEPENDENCE

- **Mutual task dependence** refers to the extent to which two units in an organization depend upon each other for:
 - assistance,
 - information,
 - compliance, or
 - other coordinative activities to complete their respective tasks effectively.
- This would describe, for instance, the interactions between the programming and market-analysis groups at a large FM radio station.

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So, the first source of organization conflict is mutual task dependence. Mutual task dependence refers to the extent to which 2 units in an organization depend upon each other for: assistance, information, compliance, or other coordinative activities to complete their respective tasks effectively. This would describe, for instance, the interaction between the programming and market-analysis group at a large FM radio station.

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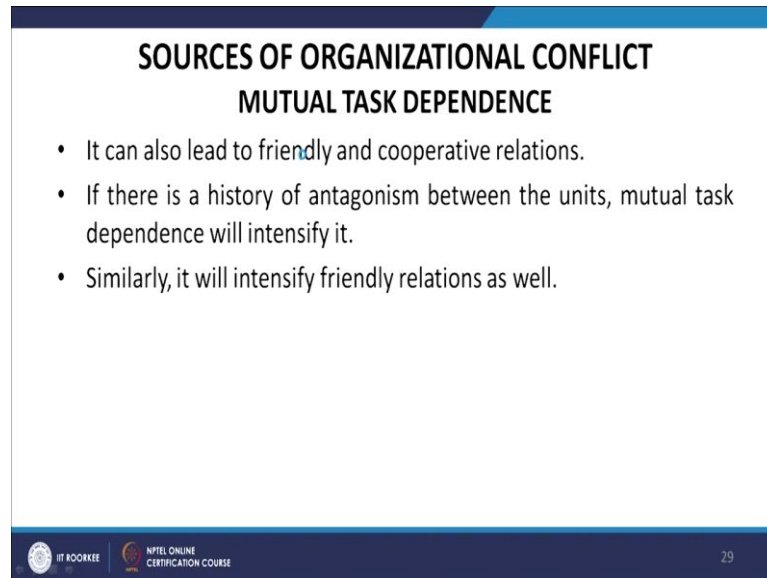
SOURCES OF ORGANIZATIONAL CONFLICT
MUTUAL TASK DEPENDENCE

- They depend on each other to determine the right balance in their music format.
- The linkage between mutual task dependence and conflict is not direct.
- What we know is that the former raises the intensity of interunit relations.
- When forced to interact, there is a definite escalation in the potential for conflict.
- However, the interaction does not have to lead to conflict.

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They depend on each other to determine the right balance in their music format. The linkage between mutual task dependence and conflict is not direct. What we know is that the former raises the intensity of inter unit relations. When forced to interact, there is a definite escalation in the potential for conflict. However, the interaction does not have to lead to conflict.

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SOURCES OF ORGANIZATIONAL CONFLICT

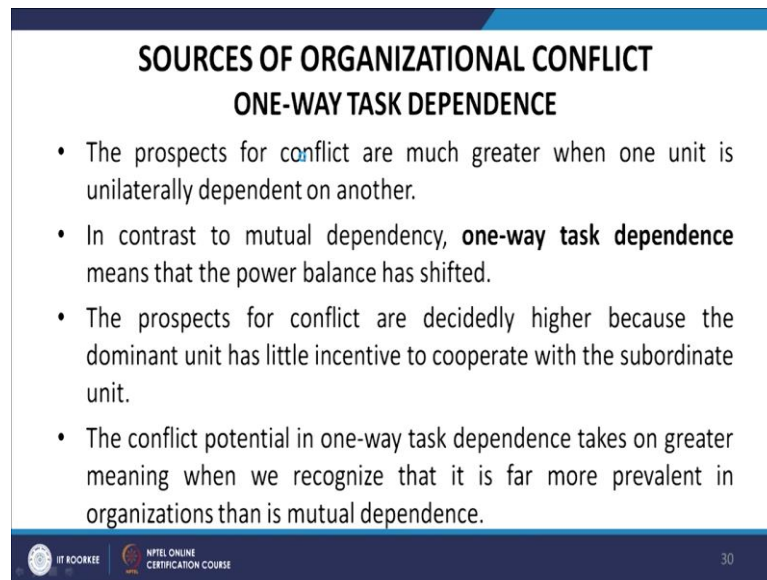
MUTUAL TASK DEPENDENCE

- It can also lead to friendly and cooperative relations.
- If there is a history of antagonism between the units, mutual task dependence will intensify it.
- Similarly, it will intensify friendly relations as well.

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It may also lead to friendly and cooperative relations. If there is a history of antagonism between the units, mutual task dependence will intensify it. Similarly, it will intensify friendly relations as well.

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SOURCES OF ORGANIZATIONAL CONFLICT
ONE-WAY TASK DEPENDENCE

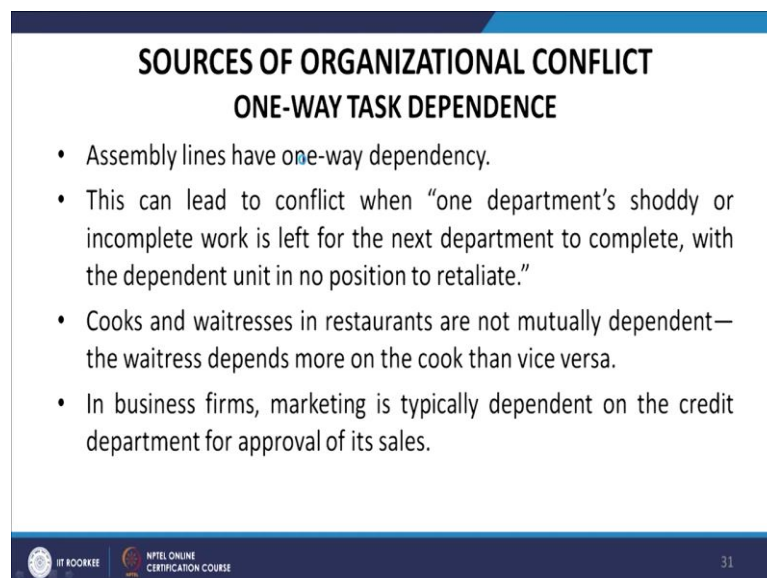
- The prospects for conflict are much greater when one unit is unilaterally dependent on another.
- In contrast to mutual dependency, **one-way task dependence** means that the power balance has shifted.
- The prospects for conflict are decidedly higher because the dominant unit has little incentive to cooperate with the subordinate unit.
- The conflict potential in one-way task dependence takes on greater meaning when we recognize that it is far more prevalent in organizations than is mutual dependence.

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The second source of organizational conflict is, one-way task dependence. The prospects for conflict are much greater when one unit is unilaterally dependent on another.

In contrast to mutual dependency, one-way task dependence means that the power balance has shifted. The prospects for conflict are decidedly higher because the dominant unit has little incentive to cooperate with the subordinate units. The conflict potential in one-way task dependence takes on greater meaning when we recognize that it is far more prevalent in organizations that is mutual dependence.

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SOURCES OF ORGANIZATIONAL CONFLICT
ONE-WAY TASK DEPENDENCE

- Assembly lines have one-way dependency.
- This can lead to conflict when “one department’s shoddy or incomplete work is left for the next department to complete, with the dependent unit in no position to retaliate.”
- Cooks and waitresses in restaurants are not mutually dependent—the waitress depends more on the cook than vice versa.
- In business firms, marketing is typically dependent on the credit department for approval of its sales.

IT ROORKEE NPTEL ONLINE CERTIFICATION COURSE 31

Assembly lines have one-way dependency. This can lead to conflict when “one department’s shoddy or incomplete work is left for the next department to complete, with the dependent units in no position to retaliate”. Cooks and waitresses in restaurants are not mutually dependent- the waitress depends more on the cook than vice versa. In business firms, marketing is typically dependent on the credit department for approval of its sales.

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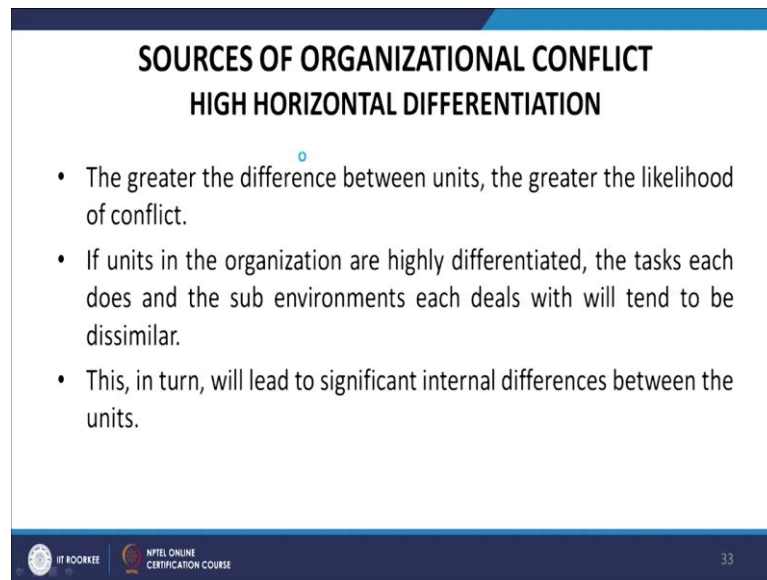
SOURCES OF ORGANIZATIONAL CONFLICT
ONE-WAY TASK DEPENDENCE

- The medical examiner in a hospital is dependent on the laboratory unit for autopsy results.
- In fact, almost all line-staff relations are based on one-way task dependence.
- The staff is required to get along with the line, understand the line’s problem, and justify its own existence, whereas none of these requirements is reciprocated by the line groups.

IIT ROORKEE NPTEL ONLINE CERTIFICATION COURSE 32

The medical examiner in a hospital is dependent on the laboratory unit for autopsy results. In fact, almost all line-staff relations are based on one-way task dependence. The staff is required to get along with the line, understand the line’s problem, and justify their own existence, whereas none of these requirements is reciprocated by the line groups.

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SOURCES OF ORGANIZATIONAL CONFLICT
HIGH HORIZONTAL DIFFERENTIATION

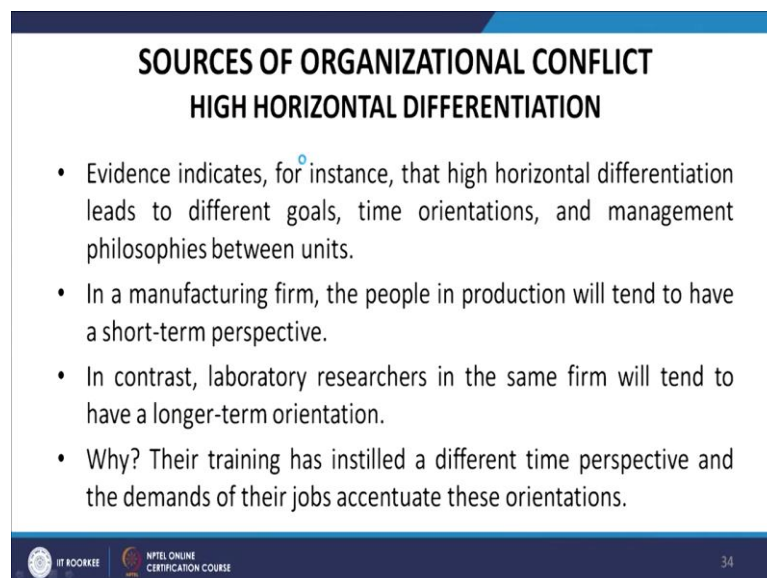
- The greater the difference between units, the greater the likelihood of conflict.
- If units in the organization are highly differentiated, the tasks each does and the sub environments each deals with will tend to be dissimilar.
- This, in turn, will lead to significant internal differences between the units.

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Another source of organizational conflict is high horizontal differentiation. The greater the difference between units, the greater the likelihood of conflict. If units in the organization are highly differentiated, the tasks each does and the sub environments each deals with will tend to be dissimilar.

This, in turn, will lead to significant internal differences between the units. Evidence indicates, for instance, that high horizontal differentiation leads to different goals, time orientations, and management philosophies between units.

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SOURCES OF ORGANIZATIONAL CONFLICT
HIGH HORIZONTAL DIFFERENTIATION

- Evidence indicates, for instance, that high horizontal differentiation leads to different goals, time orientations, and management philosophies between units.
- In a manufacturing firm, the people in production will tend to have a short-term perspective.
- In contrast, laboratory researchers in the same firm will tend to have a longer-term orientation.
- Why? Their training has instilled a different time perspective and the demands of their jobs accentuate these orientations.

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In a manufacturing firm, the people in production will tend to have a short-term perspective. In contrast, laboratory researchers in the same firm will tend to have a long-term orientation. Why? Their training has instilled a different time perspective and the demands of their job accentuate these orientations.

There is truth to the belief that marketing people and accounting people see the organization's "world" through different eyes. It is natural by-product of specialization. Of course, high differentiation does not automatically lead to conflict.

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SOURCES OF ORGANIZATIONAL CONFLICT
HIGH HORIZONTAL DIFFERENTIATION

- There is truth to the belief that marketing people and accounting people see the organization's "world" through different eyes.
- It is a natural by-product of specialization.
- Of course, high differentiation does not automatically lead to conflict.
- Other factors such as interdependence of tasks and rewards can act to retard or stimulate the latent potential for conflict.

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Other factors such as interdependence of tasks and rewards can act to retard or stimulate the latent potential for conflict.

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SOURCES OF ORGANIZATIONAL CONFLICT
LOW FORMALIZATION

- Rules and regulations reduce conflict by minimizing ambiguity.
- High formalization establishes standardized ways for units to interact with each other.
- Role definitions are clear so that members of units know what to expect from the other.
- Conversely, where formalization is low, the potential for jurisdictional disputes increases.
- Departments, for example, jockey for resources and other power bases.

IT ROORKEE | NPTEL ONLINE CERTIFICATION COURSE 36

Now, let us look at how low formalization acts as a source of organizational conflict. Rules and regulations reduce conflict by minimizing ambiguity. High formalization establishes standardized ways for units to interact with each other. Role definitions are clear so that members of units know what to expect from the other. Conversely, where formalization is low, the potential for jurisdictional disputes increases. Departments, for example, jockey for resources and other power bases.

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SOURCES OF ORGANIZATIONAL CONFLICT
LOW FORMALIZATION

- Interactions between units, because they are not regulated formally, are characterized by negotiation.
- In this type of climate, conflicts between units are likely to flourish.
- Conflicts can still breed in highly formalized structures; however, they are likely to be more regulated and less subversive.
- As in a hockey game, the rules do not eliminate conflicts.
- Rather, they allow spectators to better anticipate when conflicts are likely to break out.

IT ROORKEE | NPTEL ONLINE CERTIFICATION COURSE 37

Interactions between units, because they are not regulated formally, are characterized by negotiation. In this type of climate, conflicts between units are likely to flourish. Conflicts can still breed in highly formalized structures; however, they are likely to be more regulated and less subversive. As in a hockey game, the rules do not eliminate conflicts. Rather, they allow spectators to better anticipate when conflicts are likely to break out.

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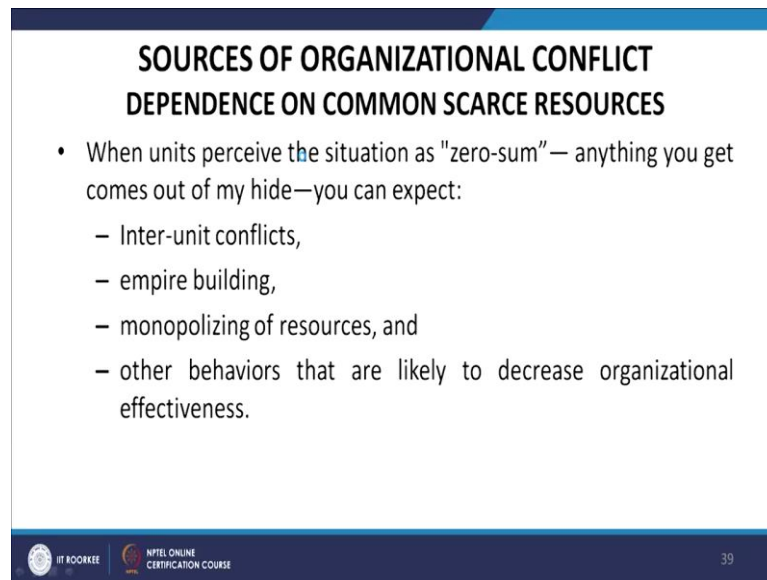
SOURCES OF ORGANIZATIONAL CONFLICT
DEPENDENCE ON COMMON SCARCE RESOURCES

- Conflict potential is enhanced when two or more units depend on a common pool of scarce resources such as:
 - Physical space
 - Equipment
 - Operating funds
 - Capital budget allocations
 - Centralized staff services such as the typing pool
- The potential is increased further if unit members perceive that their individual needs cannot be met from the available resource pool when other units' needs are satisfied.

IT ROOKIE NPTEL ONLINE CERTIFICATION COURSE 38

Another source of organizational conflict is a dependence on common scarce resources. Conflict potential is enhanced when two or more units depend on a common pool of scarce resources such as: physical space, equipment, operating funds, capital budget allocation, centralized staff services such as the typing pool. The potential is increased further if unit members perceive that their individual needs cannot be met from the available resources pool when other units' needs are satisfied.

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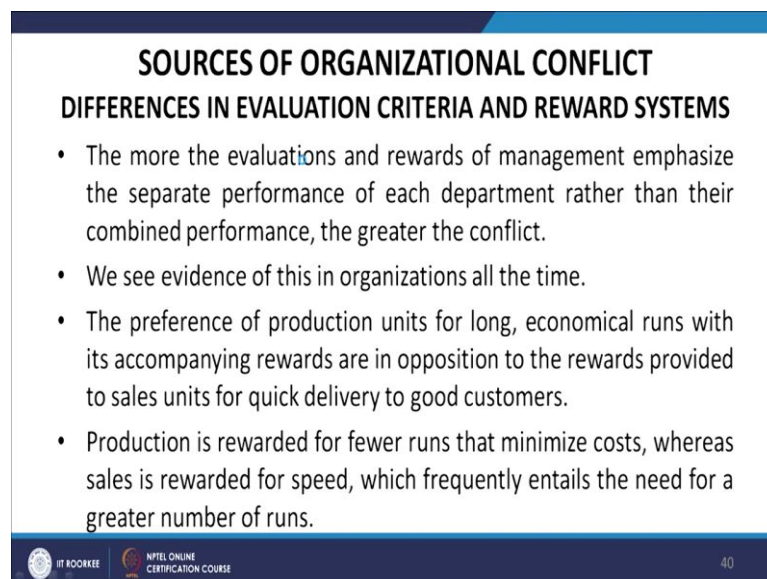
SOURCES OF ORGANIZATIONAL CONFLICT
DEPENDENCE ON COMMON SCARCE RESOURCES

- When units perceive the situation as "zero-sum" — anything you get comes out of my hide—you can expect:
 - Inter-unit conflicts,
 - empire building,
 - monopolizing of resources, and
 - other behaviors that are likely to decrease organizational effectiveness.

IT ROORKEE | NPTEL ONLINE CERTIFICATION COURSE 39

When units perceive the situation as “zero-sum”- anything you get comes out of my hide - you can expect: Inter-unit conflicts, empire building, non monopolizing of resources, and other behaviors that are likely to decrease organizational effectiveness.

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SOURCES OF ORGANIZATIONAL CONFLICT
DIFFERENCES IN EVALUATION CRITERIA AND REWARD SYSTEMS

- The more the evaluations and rewards of management emphasize the separate performance of each department rather than their combined performance, the greater the conflict.
- We see evidence of this in organizations all the time.
- The preference of production units for long, economical runs with its accompanying rewards are in opposition to the rewards provided to sales units for quick delivery to good customers.
- Production is rewarded for fewer runs that minimize costs, whereas sales is rewarded for speed, which frequently entails the need for a greater number of runs.

IT ROORKEE | NPTEL ONLINE CERTIFICATION COURSE 40

Yet another source of organizational conflict is the differences in evaluation criteria and reward systems. The more the evaluation and rewards of management emphasize the separate performance of each department rather than their combined performance, the greater the conflict. We see evidence of this in organizations all the time.

The preference of production units for long, economical runs with its accompanying rewards are in opposition to the rewards provided to sales units for quick delivery to good customers. Production is rewarded for fewer runs that minimize costs, whereas sales is rewarded for speed, which frequently entails the need for a greater number of runs.

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SOURCES OF ORGANIZATIONAL CONFLICT

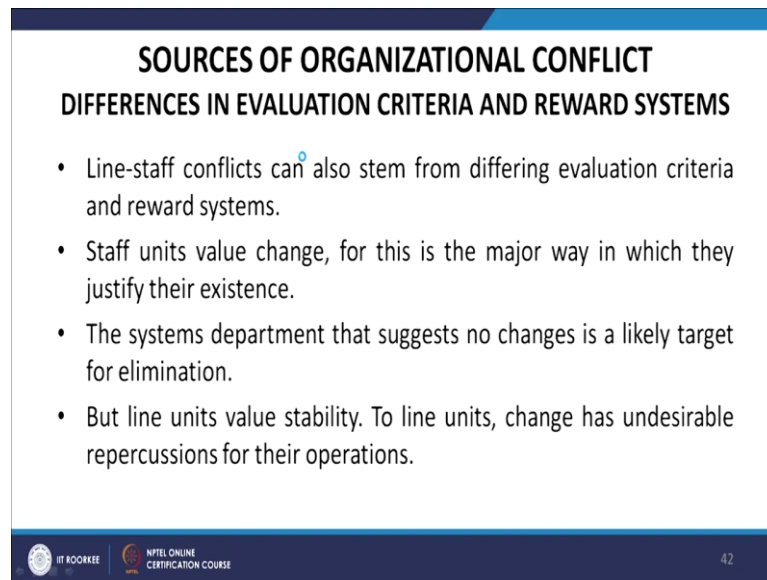
DIFFERENCES IN EVALUATION CRITERIA AND REWARD SYSTEMS

- Similarly, sales is rewarded for selling as much as possible.
- The credit unit, however, is typically rewarded for minimizing losses.
- This objective is achieved by curtailing sales to marginal accounts.
- Many a sales manager spends hours each week trying to convince the credit executive in his or her firm that what the credit department considers a financially unworthy customer is actually "marginally acceptable."

IIT ROORKEE NPTEL ONLINE CERTIFICATION COURSE 41

Similarly, sales is rewarded for selling as much as possible. The credit unit, however, is typically rewarded for minimizing losses. This objective is achieved by curtailing sales to marginal accounts. Many a sales manager spends hours each week trying to convince the credit executive in his or her firm that what the credit department considers a financially unworthy customer is actually “marginally acceptable”.

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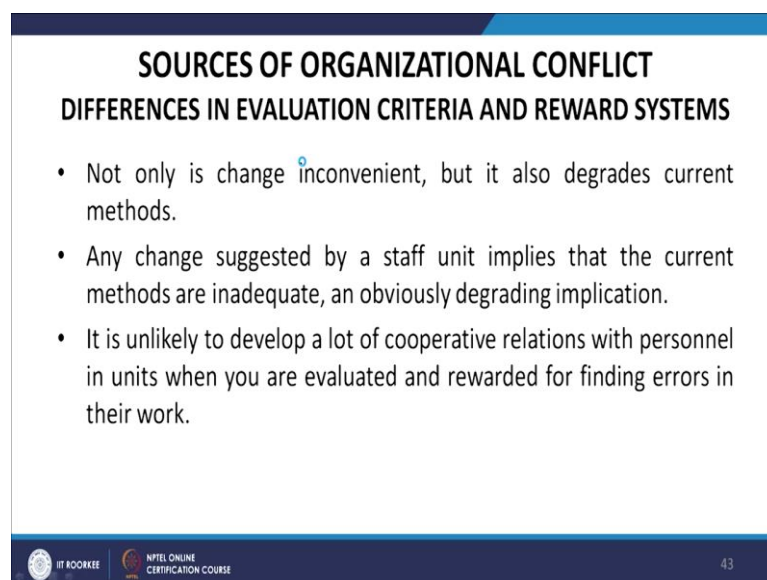
SOURCES OF ORGANIZATIONAL CONFLICT
DIFFERENCES IN EVALUATION CRITERIA AND REWARD SYSTEMS

- Line-staff conflicts can also stem from differing evaluation criteria and reward systems.
- Staff units value change, for this is the major way in which they justify their existence.
- The systems department that suggests no changes is a likely target for elimination.
- But line units value stability. To line units, change has undesirable repercussions for their operations.

IT ROORKEE | NPTEL ONLINE CERTIFICATION COURSE 42

Line-staff conflicts also stem from differing evaluation criteria and reward systems. Staff unit value change, for this is the major way in which they justify their existence. The systems department that suggests no change is a likely target for elimination. But line units value stability. To line units, change has undesirable repercussions for their operations.

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SOURCES OF ORGANIZATIONAL CONFLICT
DIFFERENCES IN EVALUATION CRITERIA AND REWARD SYSTEMS

- Not only is change inconvenient, but it also degrades current methods.
- Any change suggested by a staff unit implies that the current methods are inadequate, an obviously degrading implication.
- It is unlikely to develop a lot of cooperative relations with personnel in units when you are evaluated and rewarded for finding errors in their work.

IT ROORKEE | NPTEL ONLINE CERTIFICATION COURSE 43

Not only is change inconvenient, but it also degrades current methods. Any change suggested by a staff unit implies that the current methods are inadequate, an obviously

degrading implication. It is unlikely to develop a lot of cooperative relations with personnel in units when you are evaluated and rewarded for finding errors in their work. Then comes participative decision making as a source of organizational conflict.

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SOURCES OF ORGANIZATIONAL CONFLICT

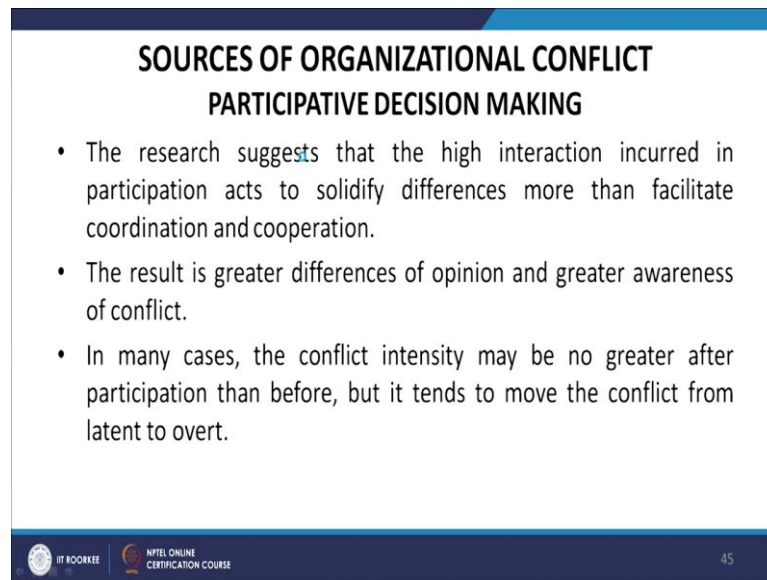
PARTICIPATIVE DECISION MAKING

- The evidence finds that joint decision making, where those who will be affected by a decision are made part of the decision-making body, promotes conflict.
- The participative process permits a greater opportunity for the expression of existing disputes and allows more occasions for disagreements to arise.
- This is especially likely to occur when true value differences exist among the participants.

IT ROOKIE NPTEL ONLINE CERTIFICATION COURSE 44

The evidence finds that joint decision making, where those who will be affected by the decision are made part of the decision-making body, promotes conflict. The participative process permits a greater opportunity for the expression of existing disputes and allows more occasions for disagreements to arise. This is especially likely to occur when true value differences exist among the participants.

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SOURCES OF ORGANIZATIONAL CONFLICT
PARTICIPATIVE DECISION MAKING

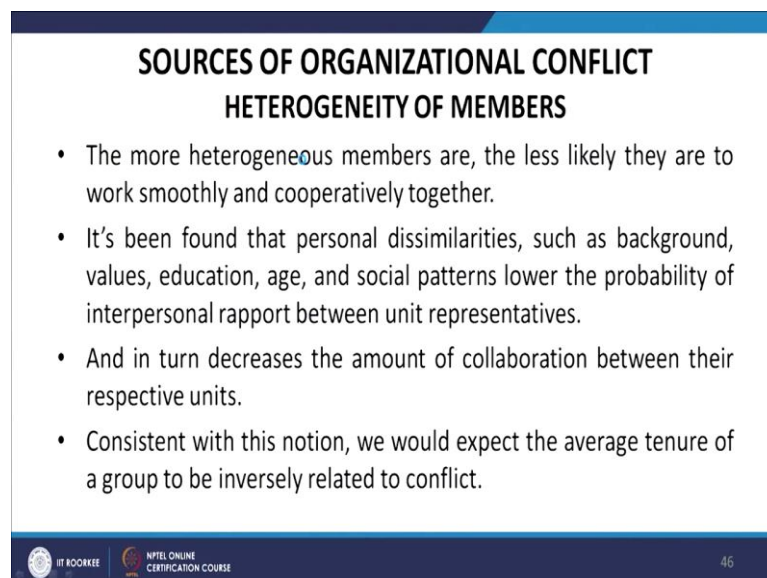
- The research suggests that the high interaction incurred in participation acts to solidify differences more than facilitate coordination and cooperation.
- The result is greater differences of opinion and greater awareness of conflict.
- In many cases, the conflict intensity may be no greater after participation than before, but it tends to move the conflict from latent to overt.

IT ROORKEE | NPTEL ONLINE CERTIFICATION COURSE 45

The research suggests that the high interaction incurred in participation acts to solidify differences more than facilitate coordination and cooperation. The result is greater differences of opinion and greater awareness of conflict.

In many cases, the conflict intensity may be greater after participation than before, but it tends to move the conflict from latent to overt. Another source of organizational conflict is heterogeneity of members. The more heterogeneous members are, the less likely they are to work smoothly and cooperatively together.

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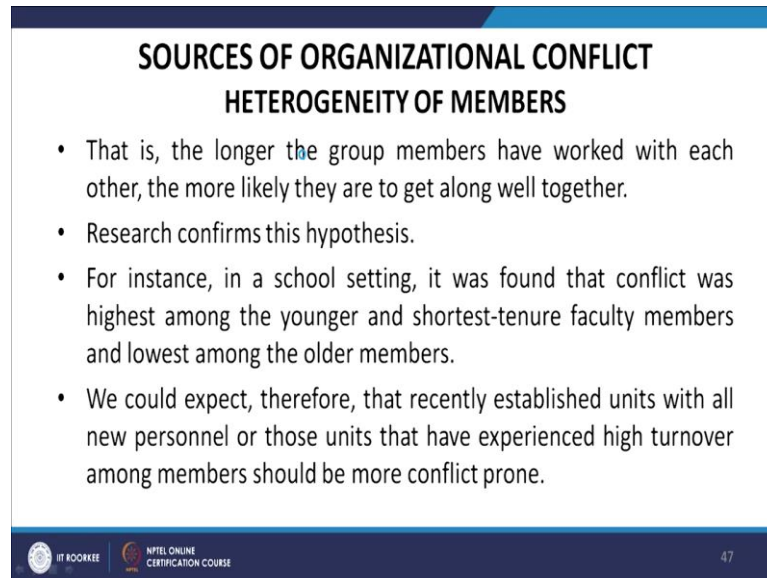
SOURCES OF ORGANIZATIONAL CONFLICT
HETEROGENEITY OF MEMBERS

- The more heterogeneous members are, the less likely they are to work smoothly and cooperatively together.
- It's been found that personal dissimilarities, such as background, values, education, age, and social patterns lower the probability of interpersonal rapport between unit representatives.
- And in turn decreases the amount of collaboration between their respective units.
- Consistent with this notion, we would expect the average tenure of a group to be inversely related to conflict.

IT ROORKEE | NPTEL ONLINE CERTIFICATION COURSE 46



It has been found that personal dissimilarities, such as background, values, education, age, and social patterns lower the probability of interpersonal rapport between unit representatives, and in turn decreases the amount of collaboration between their respective units. Consistent with this notion, we would expect the average tenure of a group to be inversely related to conflict,

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SOURCES OF ORGANIZATIONAL CONFLICT
HETEROGENEITY OF MEMBERS

- That is, the longer the group members have worked with each other, the more likely they are to get along well together.
- Research confirms this hypothesis.
- For instance, in a school setting, it was found that conflict was highest among the younger and shortest-tenure faculty members and lowest among the older members.
- We could expect, therefore, that recently established units with all new personnel or those units that have experienced high turnover among members should be more conflict prone.

 IIT ROORKEE  NPTEL ONLINE CERTIFICATION COURSE 47

that is, the longer the group members have worked with each other, the more likely they are to get along well together. Research confirms this hypothesis. For instance, in a school setting, it was found that conflict was highest among the younger and shortest-faculty members and lowest among the older members. We could expect, therefore, that recently established units with all new personnel or those units that have experienced high turnover among members should be more conflict prone.

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SOURCES OF ORGANIZATIONAL CONFLICT

STATUS INCONGRUENCE

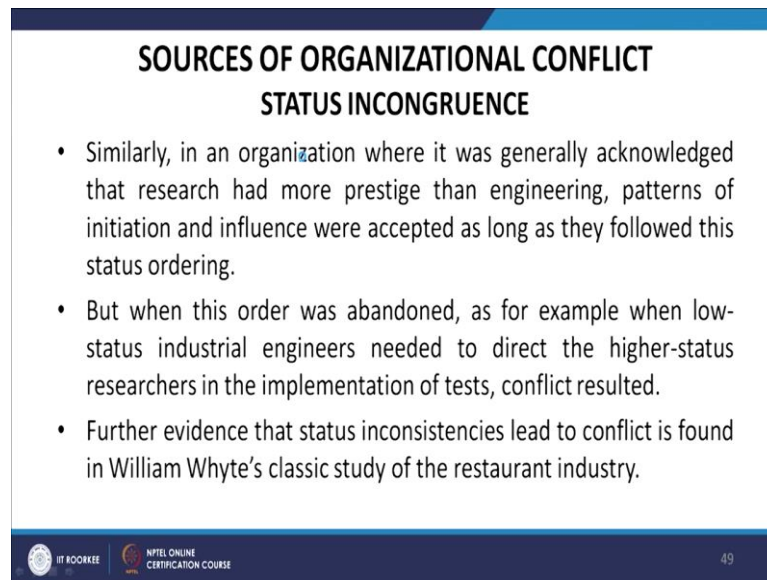
- Conflict is stimulated where incongruences occur in status gradings or from alterations in the status hierarchy.
- For instance, an increase in conflict was found when the degree to which personal status, or how one perceives oneself, and the level of departmental representation differed in rank ordering of status dimensions.
- These dimensions include length of service, age, education, and pay.

IIT ROORKEE NPTEL ONLINE CERTIFICATION COURSE 48

Now, we will look at status incongruence as a source of organizational conflict. Conflict is stimulated where incongruences occur in status gradings or from alterations in the status hierarchy. For instance, an increase in conflict was found when the degree is to which personal status, or how one perceives oneself, and the level of departmental representation differed in rank ordering of status dimensions. These dimensions include length of service, age, education and pay.

Similarly, in an organization where it is generally acknowledged that research has more prestige than engineering, patterns of initiation and influence were accepted as long as followed this status ordering. But when this order was abandoned, as for example when low-status industrial engineers needed to direct the higher-status researchers in the implementation of tests, conflict resulted.

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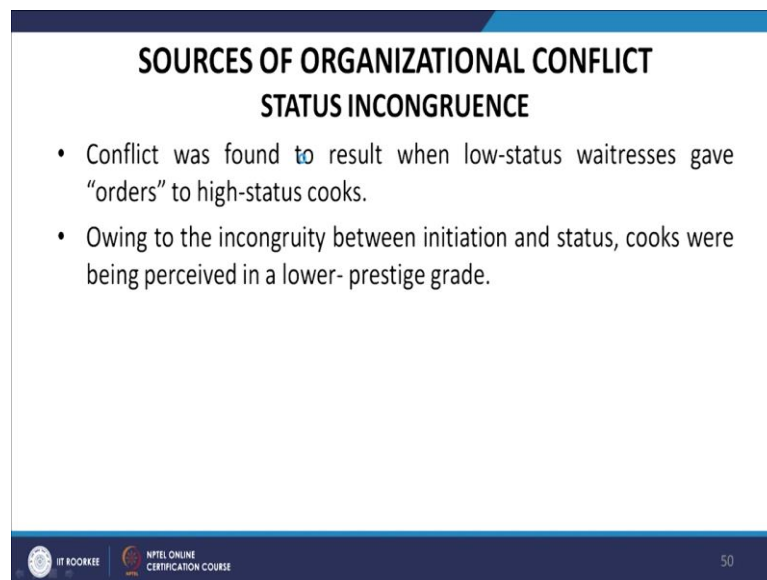
SOURCES OF ORGANIZATIONAL CONFLICT
STATUS INCONGRUENCE

- Similarly, in an organization where it was generally acknowledged that research had more prestige than engineering, patterns of initiation and influence were accepted as long as they followed this status ordering.
- But when this order was abandoned, as for example when low-status industrial engineers needed to direct the higher-status researchers in the implementation of tests, conflict resulted.
- Further evidence that status inconsistencies lead to conflict is found in William Whyte's classic study of the restaurant industry.

IT ROOKIEE NPTEL ONLINE CERTIFICATION COURSE 49

Further evidence that status inconsistencies lead to conflict is found in William Whyte's classic study of the restaurant industry.

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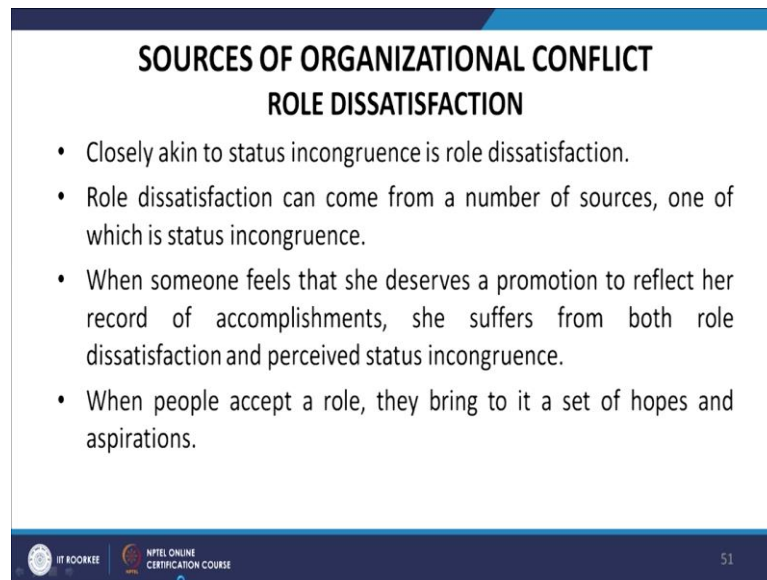
SOURCES OF ORGANIZATIONAL CONFLICT
STATUS INCONGRUENCE

- Conflict was found to result when low-status waitresses gave "orders" to high-status cooks.
- Owing to the incongruity between initiation and status, cooks were being perceived in a lower- prestige grade.

IT ROOKIEE NPTEL ONLINE CERTIFICATION COURSE 50

Conflict was found to result when low-status waitresses gave "orders" to high-status cooks. Owing to the incongruity between initiation and status, cooks were being perceived in a lower-prestige grade.

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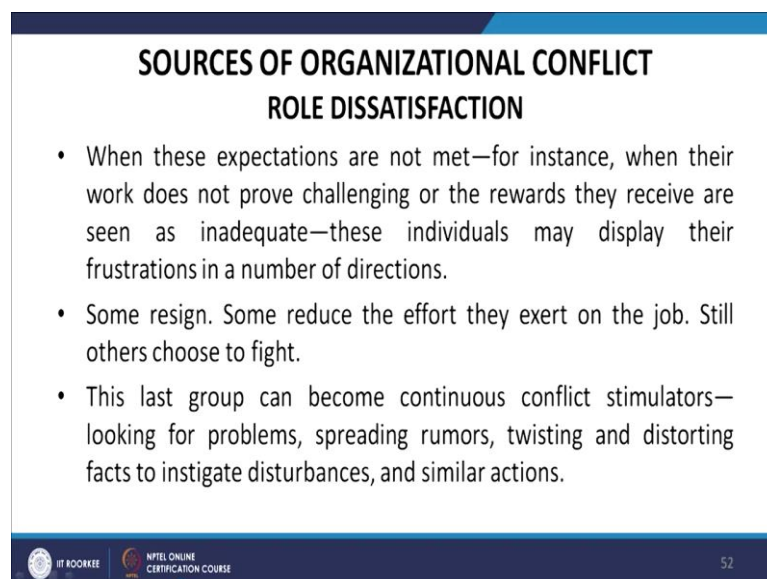
SOURCES OF ORGANIZATIONAL CONFLICT
ROLE DISSATISFACTION

- Closely akin to status incongruence is role dissatisfaction.
- Role dissatisfaction can come from a number of sources, one of which is status incongruence.
- When someone feels that she deserves a promotion to reflect her record of accomplishments, she suffers from both role dissatisfaction and perceived status incongruence.
- When people accept a role, they bring to it a set of hopes and aspirations.

IT ROORKEE | NPTEL ONLINE CERTIFICATION COURSE 51

Now comes role dissatisfaction. Closely akin to status incongruence is role dissatisfaction. Role dissatisfaction can come from a number of sources, one of which is status incongruence. When someone feels that she deserves a promotion to reflect her record of accomplishments, she suffers from both role dissatisfaction and perceived status incongruence. When people accept a role, they bring to it a set of hopes and aspirations.

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SOURCES OF ORGANIZATIONAL CONFLICT
ROLE DISSATISFACTION

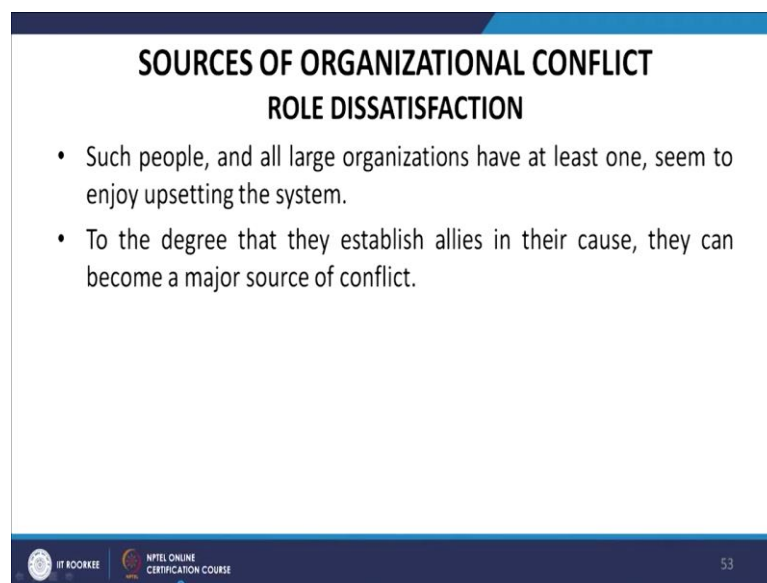
- When these expectations are not met—for instance, when their work does not prove challenging or the rewards they receive are seen as inadequate—these individuals may display their frustrations in a number of directions.
- Some resign. Some reduce the effort they exert on the job. Still others choose to fight.
- This last group can become continuous conflict stimulators—looking for problems, spreading rumors, twisting and distorting facts to instigate disturbances, and similar actions.

IT ROORKEE | NPTEL ONLINE CERTIFICATION COURSE 52

When these expectations are not met-for instance, when their work does not prove challenging or the rewards they receive are seen as inadequate-these individuals may display their frustrations in a number of directions.

Some resign. Some reduce the effort they exert on the job. Still others choose to fight. This last group can become continuous conflict stimulators-looking for problems, spreading rumors, twisting and distorting facts to instigate disturbances, and similar actions.

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SOURCES OF ORGANIZATIONAL CONFLICT

ROLE DISSATISFACTION

- Such people, and all large organizations have at least one, seem to enjoy upsetting the system.
- To the degree that they establish allies in their cause, they can become a major source of conflict.

IT BOOKEE NPTEL ONLINE CERTIFICATION COURSE 53

Such people, and all large organizations have at least one, seem to enjoy upsetting the system. To the degree that they establish allies in their cause, they can become a major source of conflict.

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SOURCES OF ORGANIZATIONAL CONFLICT
COMMUNICATION DISTORTIONS

- One frequently cited source of conflict is communication difficulties.
- An obvious case is vertical communications. As information is passed up and down the hierarchy, it is susceptible to ambiguity and distortion.
- But distortions also occur at the horizontal level.
- For instance, one researcher argued that the less the differing units know about each other's jobs, the less the collaboration that will take place.

IIT ROORKEE NPTEL ONLINE CERTIFICATION COURSE 54

Now, we will look at communication distortions. One frequently cited source of conflict is communication difficulties. An obvious case is vertical communications. As information is passed up and down the hierarchy, it is susceptible to ambiguity and distortions. But distortions also occur at the horizontal level.

For instance, one researcher argued that the less the differing units know about each other's jobs, the less the collaboration that will take place. And the lack of knowledge can lead to unreasonable inter unit demands. Semantic difficulties are a frequent problem in organizations.

They impede communication essential for cooperative efforts between units. Semantic difficulties can be attributed to the different training, background and specialization processes that members of units have undergone.

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SOURCES OF ORGANIZATIONAL CONFLICT
COMMUNICATION DISTORTIONS

- It has been reported that the difference in training of purchasing agents and engineers contributes to their conflict.
- As with physicians and professional hospital administrators, their academic training and orientations differ significantly.
- Differences in training develop disparate vocabularies and jargon, which impede the effective movement of ideas.
- Pragmatism suggests that we also mention that a source of communicative conflicts is the willful withholding of information by one unit from another.

IT ROORKEE | NPTEL ONLINE CERTIFICATION COURSE 56

It has been reported that the differences in training of purchasing agents and engineers contribute to their conflict. As with physicians and professional hospital administrators, their academic training and orientations differ significantly.

Differences in training develop disparate vocabularies and jargons, which impede the effective movement of ideas. Pragmatism suggests that we also mention that a source of communicative conflicts is the willful withholding of information by one unit from another.

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SOURCES OF ORGANIZATIONAL CONFLICT
COMMUNICATION DISTORTIONS

- As we have noted in earlier modules, information can facilitate the attainment of power.
- It is only realistic, therefore, to acknowledge that when important information is deliberately kept secret, conflicts can ensue.
- If inadequate, distorted, or ambiguous information is a source of conflict, the existence of complete or perfect knowledge might be expected to result in little or no conflict.
- Interestingly, it does not seem to work that way.

IT ROORKEE | NPTEL ONLINE CERTIFICATION COURSE 57

As we have noted in earlier modules, information can facilitate the attainment of power. It is only realistic, therefore, to acknowledge that when important information is deliberately kept secret, conflicts can ensue. If inadequate, distorted, or ambiguous information is a source of conflict, the existence of complete or perfect knowledge may be expected to result in little or no conflict. Interestingly, it does not seem to work that way.

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SOURCES OF ORGANIZATIONAL CONFLICT
COMMUNICATION DISTORTIONS

- Studies demonstrate that interdepartmental conflict increases when departments possess a great deal of knowledge of each other's activities.
- Why is that so?
- Complete knowledge makes each party's self-interest fully visible and reveals any and all inequities.
- Imperfect knowledge, on the other hand, clouds self-interest, diminishes disparities, and makes coordination easier.

IIT ROORKEE NPTEL ONLINE CERTIFICATION COURSE 58

Studies demonstrate that interdepartmental conflict increases when departments possess a great deal of knowledge of each other's activities. But why is that? So, complete knowledge makes each party's self-interest fully visible and reveals any and all inequities. Imperfect knowledge, on the other hand, clouds self-interest, diminish disparities, and make coordination easier.

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SOURCES OF ORGANIZATIONAL CONFLICT

COMMUNICATION DISTORTIONS

- We can conclude that communication extremes can be sources of conflict.
- Inadequate or unclear communications stimulate conflict.
- So, too, does perfect or complete information.

IIT ROORKEE NPTEL ONLINE CERTIFICATION COURSE 59

We can conclude that communication extremes can be sources of conflict. Inadequate or unclear communications stimulate conflict. So, too, does perfect or complete information.

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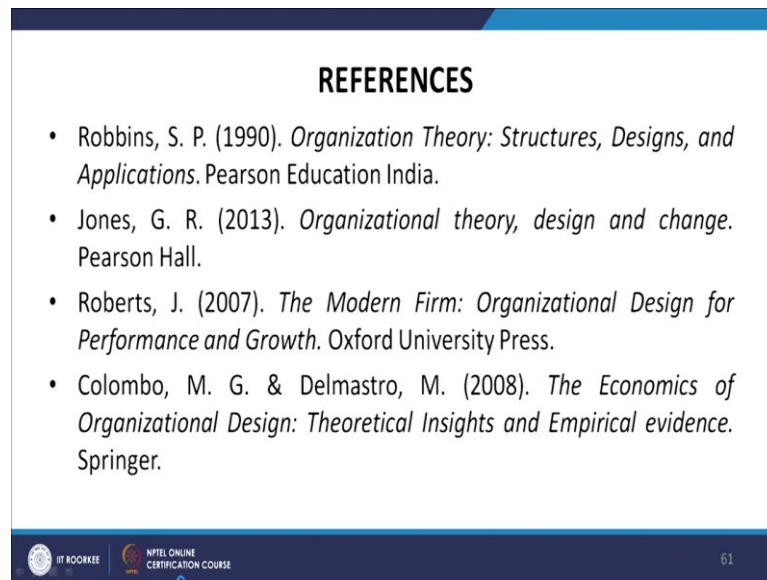
CONCLUSION

- In this module we defined conflict.
- We also learnt about contrasting views of conflicts: the traditional and interactionist.
- Then, we identified situations when management should stimulate conflict.
- Finally we learnt about the major sources of organizational conflict.

IIT ROORKEE NPTEL ONLINE CERTIFICATION COURSE 60



So, to conclude in this module we defined conflict. We also learnt about contrasting views of conflicts: the traditional and interactionist. Then, we identified situations when managers should stimulate conflict. Finally, we learnt about the major sources of organizational conflict.

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And these are the 4 books used for making this module.

Thank you.