



# Organisational conflict

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## Abstract:

The human organizational behavior is a result of the interaction of behaviors within the organization. The latter is not isolated from society or the external environment, including cultural, civilizational, economic, and political influences. Therefore, human behaviors are a result of interaction with this environment and its components. As it is known, an organization does not remain static in its pursuit of objectives but is in constant motion, necessitating continuous change and development that may lead to conflicts during goal achievement. Thus, conflict is considered a natural phenomenon inherent to individuals and groups in human societies due to differences in their preparations, inclinations, desires, and orientations as well as differences in their values and attitudes. Therefore, it can be said that conflicts occurring within any organization are natural and should be managed to achieve maximum benefit from them

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## Introduction

In accordance with contemporary management trends, administrative organisations are considered social organisations in which people constitute the primary resource that embodies their vitality and interactivity. This is because the organisation's standing, both internally and externally, and its ability to achieve its objectives depend on the competence, effectiveness and positive interaction of its human resources.

This interaction and engagement between individuals through daily work may lead to cooperation and agreement at times, and to conflict and disagreement at others, which may result in conflicts that affect organisational behaviour and the job performance of employees. Management thought on the phenomenon of organisational conflict has varied, ranging from



those who view it as a natural phenomenon that is inevitable and must be managed, to those who view it as a pathological phenomenon that must be addressed and eliminated due to its negative effects. This has led many studies to emphasise the need to examine the subject of conflict, as it is considered one of the most significant managerial challenges facing any organisation. The aim is to enhance its positive aspects and rectify its negative ones, with a view to achieving the organisation's objectives and optimising the performance of its employees.

The importance of studying the subject of organisational conflict lies in its relevance to today's administrative landscape, where the differences and conflicts witnessed in various administrative activities have compelled researchers' attention; all of this has made it a priority subject at the very heart of human intellectual endeavour. One of the key justifications for focusing on this topic is that the human element is a strategic resource, conferring excellence and leadership, and consequently, the search for how to manage it, in addition to drawing the attention of managers and employees to the subject of conflict and its paramount importance in its impact on staff performance, and analysing its dimensions and management strategies. Accordingly, this brief study seeks to determine whether organisational conflict is a healthy phenomenon that contributes to improving job performance within contemporary organisations, or whether it is a pathological phenomenon with negative repercussions on it, as well as attempting to present proposals and future visions regarding appropriate methods for managing organisational conflict and increasing and improving performance levels and job satisfaction.

## – Organisational Conflict

### 01- The Concept of Conflict:

- **Linguistic definition of conflict:** The linguistic meaning of the word 'conflict' in Arabic is dispute, quarrel, argument, discord, disagreement and schism. The word 'conflict', on the other hand, is of Latin origin and means brawl, quarrel or clash. Thus, by derivation, conflict means a clash of interests and opinions or a disagreement.

- **Conflict in technical terms:** Scholars have not agreed on a unified definition of conflict due to the diversity of their schools of thought. Among these definitions:

Al-Qaryouti defines it as an intentional act by one party to negatively affect the other party, in a way that impairs that party's ability to achieve its objectives and serve its interests, as



differences arise among employees and various sub-units in the ways they view their own work and the work carried out by other groups. and when interaction occurs between these different groups through their daily work, there is a possibility of conflict or contradiction arising between them. (Abbas Samir, 2021)

## **02- The concept of organisational conflict:**

Organisational conflict is considered the highest degree of disagreement, and is referred to in some Arabic literature as 'organisational conflict'. It is one of the natural features that an organisation faces, and the reason for this may be the multitude and diversity of variables and factors that overlap and intertwine within the organisational environment, such as relationships between employees or the relationship between employees and the organisation, or disagreements between formal and informal groups.

- Fred Luthans defines organisational conflict as the process in which units within a system seek to achieve their interests at the expense of other units. (Gharbi Sabrina, 2013)
- William, on the other hand, defines it as 'that dynamic situation resulting from the process of necessary social interaction within the organisation, which occurs between two or more individuals or between two or more groups at the formal or informal level, and every organisational conflict has its parties, motives, means and consequences for the organisation; it also refers to a state of tension between two or more individuals, one or more groups, or even the organisation itself, due to each party's desire to gain access to sources of power and material and moral privileges, It is a natural organisational behaviour arising from intense competition over scarce resources, or from differences over management methods.
- Mohammed Al-Sirafi defines it as "a social phenomenon linked to human behaviour, which manifests when a person experiences a form of frustration or imbalance." (Mukarroun Heba, 2018)
- The researcher Naji Jawad defines organisational conflict as a form of social interaction and a behavioural phenomenon representing a situation of intense competition between individuals, because each party in this situation believes and realises that the other party is standing in the way of their progress towards the goal. Therefore, any attempt to arrive at a single definition will result in a futile, endless debate, as conflict is the result of the interaction of a number of



issues, objects and people, and every variable that exists within or arises from the situation.”  
(Bouzaouid Fella, 2023)

### **03- Characteristics of organisational conflict:**

There are several fundamental characteristics of organisational conflict, which can be summarised as follows:

- Conflict involves the existence of unequal primary objectives among the parties involved, and dialogue is the preferred means for these parties to achieve a state of equilibrium in their objectives.
- Tension is a fundamental dimension of conflict, which carries with it the possibility that the parties involved may engage in hostile activity against one another to force one or more of the parties to accept solutions with which they are not satisfied.
- Conflict represents a temporary situation, although many conflicts are necessary.
- Conflict involves an attempt by some parties to force rival parties to accept a solution or agreement that the latter may not desire.
- Conflict imposes heavy burdens and costs on the parties involved throughout the duration of the conflict, which ultimately compels them to resolve the conflict either by peaceful or coercive means.
- The parties to the conflict have the capacity to harm one another, and each party aims to thwart the other’s objectives; furthermore, the outcome of the conflict remains unknown to all parties until it is resolved. (Al-Amayan Mahmoud Suleiman, 2005)

### **04- Types of organisational conflict:**

Some classify organisational conflict within an organisation into six types, as follows:

A. **Intrapersonal conflict:** This conflict arises for several reasons, including contradictions between an individual’s roles, contradictions between an individual’s goals and the organisation’s goals, or problems at work. Kazim Hamoud believes that this type of conflict usually arises for the following reasons:

- **Non-acceptance of the decision:** a situation in which the individual feels frustrated due to the lack of an alternative that achieves the desired goal.

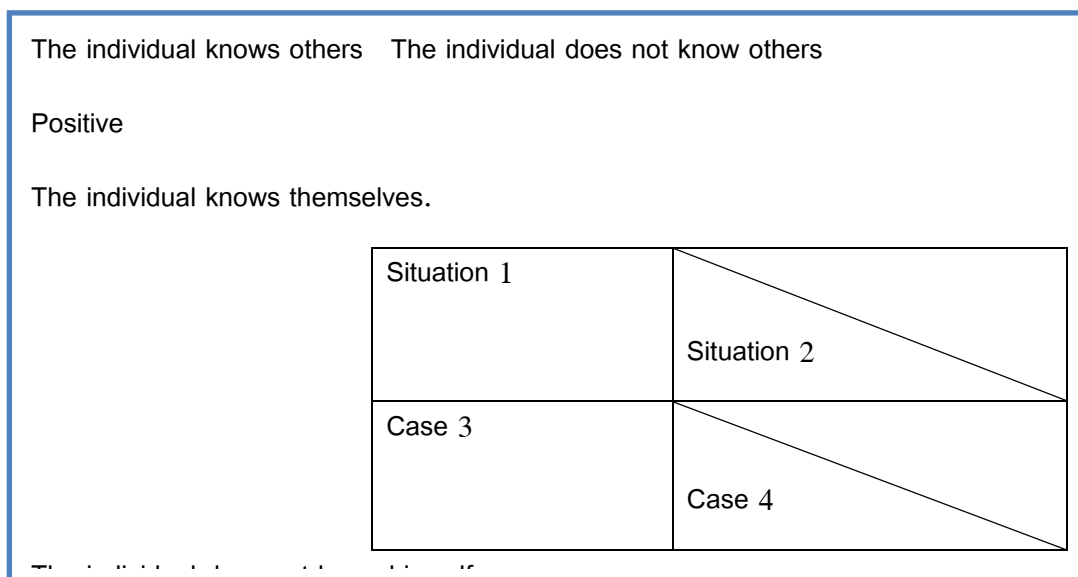


- **Inability to compare:** This arises from conflicting goals and overlapping alternatives, making it difficult to identify the best decision required to resolve the decision-making problem.
- **Uncertainty:** In this situation, the individual is unable to determine the probability distribution of expected outcomes, which causes problems arising from the interdependence and overlap of alternatives.

**B. Interpersonal conflict:**

This type of conflict arises between individuals themselves as a result of differences in their needs and the roles they play, as well as differences in their attitudes and beliefs. In addition to variations in their perceptions and differences in their communication skills, all of this makes it natural for conflicting positions to arise between them as an inevitable result of interaction among group members. (S. Hamdi Abdel-Momen and Asmaa Qariqa, 2022)

Figure 1: Johari Window Model



**One of the common models for analysing the dynamics of conflict between individuals is a model known as the Johari Window**

The Johari Window is based on the assumption that there are things a person knows about themselves and things they do not know, as well as things others know about them and things they do not know. Each of the four states reflects a combination of information that is



of particular importance in the process of interaction between individuals. The following is an explanation of the states:

- **The first situation:** the individual knows themselves and knows others. This is the best-case scenario, in which the individual is aware of their own feelings, perceptions and motivations, and also has information about the motivations, attitudes and perceptions of the others with whom they interact. This type of interaction leads to the building of mutual trust and strength in interactions with others, as it facilitates communication and reduces the likelihood of any problems or conflicts arising.
- **The second case:** The individual knows only themselves. The problem here lies in the individual's lack of knowledge of others' tendencies and motivations, which results from a lack of interaction and contact with others. Consequently, the individual is unable to predict or control others' behaviour, which increases their hesitation in dealing with them and leads to conflict.
- **The third case:** The individual knows only others. In this case, the individual is aware of the feelings and motivations of those they interact with, whilst their self-awareness is low. This situation may result from the individual's desire not to reveal their true motivations and feelings to them. (S. Hamdi Abdel-Momen and A. Qariqa, 2022)
- **The fourth case:** The individual knows neither themselves nor others. This is considered the worst-case scenario, where a lack of understanding and poor communication escalate, and the situation erupts into acute conflicts between members of the same group.

#### C. **Intergroup conflict:**

This type of conflict arises within an organisation, where work groups, departments and divisions within the organisation hold specific views about their own work and that of other groups. There are usually differences in perspective, and when these groups interact, these differences and conflicts of view come to the surface. Kazem Hamoud believes that the fundamental factors leading to such conflict are:

- Differences in the perceptions of the conflicting groups.
- Differences in objectives resulting from limited resources and capabilities, and the difficulty of making collective decisions.

#### D. **Conflict within the organisation:**

This type of conflict takes the following forms:



- **Vertical conflict:** This usually occurs between departments, divisions and organisational units at the same organisational level.
- **Vertical conflict:** This occurs between a supervisor and their subordinates within a specific work context, for example, as a result of disagreement over how to carry out the work.

#### **E. Conflict between consultants and executives:**

This occurs between staff and consultants within the organisation over resources or participation in decision-making.

#### **F. Role conflict:**

This arises from the breakdown of the two classic principles of unity of command and chain of command, and results in a decline in the organisation's effectiveness. Organisations with a single, clear line of authority from top to bottom are often better able to satisfy their employees and achieve their objectives than organisations and institutions with multiple lines of authority. (S. Hamdi Abdel-Momen and Asmaa Qarika, 2022)

#### **G. Inter-organisational conflict:**

This conflict arises when one organisation creates conditions, difficulties or obstacles for another organisation regarding production, marketing or suppliers, in addition to problems arising from the limited availability of investment markets, their size, and the nature of supply and demand structures, prices and purchasing power between organisations.

#### **H. Strategic conflict:**

This arises as a result of a pre-determined plan to achieve a specific goal, whereby organisations take on a dynamic character through conflict; this conception differs from the classical view of the organisation.

### **05- Theories of organisational conflict:**

Many theories have sought to explain conflict; we shall refer to three main theories: the traditional theory, the behavioural theory, and the interactional theory.

#### **A. Traditional theory:**

This theory adopted the idea that conflict, in all its forms and types, is harmful to the organisation and must be eliminated by any means available. It also posited that conflict must be avoided and that it is an indicator of disruption within the group, and that a successful manager is one who does not acknowledge conflict but rather attempts to eradicate it from the organisation they manage by any means possible. It is clear that proponents of this theory



viewed conflict as damaging to the organisation and therefore believed it must be dealt with on this basis. The key assumptions of this theory are:

- Conflict is a situation that can be avoided.
- Conflict is usually caused by specific individuals (troublemakers).
- Authority must play an active role in preventing conflict.
- If conflict does occur, management should ignore it.

This theory can be linked to the efforts of classical school figures such as Taylor and Fayol, who viewed conflict as a negative phenomenon and advocated the need to avoid it in order to achieve harmony through laws, regulations and procedures.

### **B. Behavioural theory:**

This **theory** adopted the idea that conflict is necessary and that management must recognise it and determine an acceptable level of conflict that serves its objectives under existing circumstances. It held that conflict is inevitable and that it is not entirely negative; rather, some positive aspects can be observed in it. Although behavioural theorists acknowledge that conflict (Al-Kanaan, Nawal bint Muhammad, 2010) has a negative impact on the organisation, strains relationships between its members, and sometimes disrupts its programmes, a successful manager is one who can identify conflict, keep it within reasonable limits, and utilise it to enhance the organisation's performance.

This theory can be linked to the Human Relations Movement, which focused on the social system to achieve harmony, arguing that the creation of good social relationships leads to individuals feeling happy, which in turn leads to harmony and effectiveness. This theory emphasises that conflict is a natural and unavoidable state that arises as a result of the group carrying out its work; however, it is not harmful but rather holds strong potential for positive group performance. Nevertheless, this theory fails to recognise the importance of functional conflict and its role in the health of the organisation, and views it as necessary to resolve or mitigate conflict, control its scale, and discourage its occurrence.

### **C. Interactionist Theory:**

**This theory** encourages conflict on the assumption that harmony, peace, balance and cooperation within a group lead to stagnation and passivity, and a failure to respond to the needs of a changing environment. Perhaps the key contribution of the interactional approach is to encourage leaders of organisations and groups to maintain a minimum level of conflict –



sufficient to keep the group vibrant, self-critical and creative. That said, whether the outcomes of conflict are positive or negative depends on the type of conflict. She argued that conflict is a positive phenomenon and that managers should foster it, as, from the perspective of proponents of this theory, the presence of conflict revitalises the organisation, stimulates its operations, and thereby enables it to achieve its objectives in the best possible way (Al-Kanaan, Nawal bint Muhammad, 2010).

#### **06- Stages of the conflict process:**

Conflicts in organisations usually go through several stages. Louis Pondy's model proposes the following stages of organisational conflict:

##### **A. Latent conflict stage:**

At this stage, there is a cause or source of conflict, which is likely to develop into a conflict, but has not yet occurred; rather, it remains buried or hidden.

##### **B. Perceived conflict stage:**

Here, one of the parties realises the significance of the disagreement in relation to their interests (Harim Hussein, 2013), and the disagreement may lead to conflict.

##### **C. Felt conflict stage:**

At this stage, a feeling or emotional reaction arises among the parties to the conflict; a personal and internal sense of conflict, and the individual seeks to win, even at the expense of the organisation's overall objectives.

##### **D. Manifest Conflict:**

At this **stage**, the conflict becomes public and comes to the surface; it is laid bare and expressed through behaviour, with each party deliberately seeking to thwart their opponent through non-cooperation and sabotage. As a result, individuals are unable to work together, and this destructive behaviour necessitates addressing the conflict at this stage.

##### **E. Conflict Management Aftermath:**

The outcome of the conflict depends on how it is managed and resolved. If the conflict is managed in a way that satisfies all parties, this will encourage future cooperation, mutual understanding and coordination between the conflicting parties.

However, if the conflict is suppressed, avoided, or managed in a way that leads to a 'winner-takes-all' outcome, matters are likely to worsen, and new conflicts may emerge later.



Furthermore, if employees feel frustrated as a result of the failure to manage the conflict, the renewed conflict could pose a far greater problem than the original situation.

It is very important to observe and monitor the early stages of conflict, as resolving the conflict at that point will be much easier than it will be in the later stages. On the other hand, the absence of overt conflict within an organisation generally means that there is hidden conflict, not that conflict does not exist (Harim Hussein, 1013).

#### **07- Causes of organisational conflict:**

More specifically, it can be said that contradictions are a characteristic feature of managerial behaviour in many organisations. Examples include the relationship that may arise between those with decision-making authority (Line People) and members of advisory bodies (Staff People), as well as uncooperative communication between subordinates, and the conflict between organisational objectives and those of employees. These contradictions can begin and develop in a healthy manner, resulting in the recognition of and positive utilisation of differing opinions and perspectives, rather than exploding and destroying the very purpose for which the organisation was established, or being mishandled to the point of becoming harmful and destructive to the organisation. There are many reasons for the emergence of contradictions that necessitate coordination, including:

##### **A. Situations where joint decision-making is required:**

Relying on multiple parties to reach a decision increases the likelihood of conflict due to differing views and concepts on many matters. However, if decisions are made individually without relying on others, the likelihood of conflicts arising is lower. Furthermore, an imbalance in the powers granted to the parties involved in making a particular decision increases the likelihood of contradictions arising.

##### **B. Differences in Objectives and Values:**

The presence of individuals with differing objectives and values leads to the emergence of uncooperative relationships characterised by contradictions, which can harm the public interest. Furthermore, dual membership—meaning that the more an individual belongs to two groups with differing objectives or holds two different positions—increases the potential for conflict.



**C. Differences in Perceptions:**

Differences in individuals' perceptions and affiliations cause them to view the same phenomena in different ways, due to the link between perceptions and objectives and values (Al-Frijat, Khudair, Kazim, Mahmoud et al., 2009)

**D. Loose Power and Role Ambiguity:**

A lack of precision in defining the tools provided to individuals and the authority required to use them can leave individuals confused and unable to act, thereby causing conflicts with colleagues rather than fostering cooperation.

**E. Scarcity and limited resources:**

The more limited the resources, the more intense the conflict becomes and the greater the likelihood of disputes; the opposite is also true.

**F. The nature of some individuals who are aggressive and uncooperative:**

There are people who, by nature, are prone to aggression and unwilling to cooperate with others; they are characterised by a difficult and sharp temperament, which makes cooperation with them difficult and increases the likelihood of conflicts arising.

**G. Job dissatisfaction:**

A person's dissatisfaction with their job or their position, as defined by instructions and regulations, leads to various manifestations such as absenteeism, failure to perform required tasks, and a lack of cooperation with others, which may ultimately lead to leaving the job or the conflict escalating to a point where it becomes difficult to continue working. (Al-Frijat, Khudair, Kazim Mahmoud et al., 2009)

**08- The effects of organisational conflict:**

- The term 'conflict' carries a negative connotation in everyday speech; it conjures up images of anger, confrontation and destructive, abusive behaviour. However, conflict in the workplace acts as a double-edged sword within organisations: it can result in positive effects that benefit the organisation, or negative consequences that are destructive to it.
- In this regard, Louis Gallots argues that the complete absence of conflict in organisations is undesirable, as is excessive conflict. The absence of conflict indicates employees' apathy and disengagement, and that the organisation stifles creative thinking, whereas excessive conflict hinders work because it damages morale; it impedes coordination and prevents workers from achieving their goals efficiently. Therefore, the best possible outcomes are achieved when



conflict is moderate. The effects of conflict within organisations include both negative and positive aspects:

#### **A. Negative effects of conflict:**

Conflict within an organisation can lead to a range of negative effects, including:

- Conflict within an organisation leads to low morale and reduced job satisfaction, and this decline in morale manifests itself in avoidant behaviour such as absenteeism and job turnover. (Zouiter, Sarah, 2014)
- Conflict also diverts energy away from the organisation's goals, thereby affecting organisational effectiveness.
- It can generate frustration, anger and stress among employees.
- It weakens coordination, as evidenced by individuals viewing one another negatively or, at the group level, by one group's perception of another. In this regard, both Refai, Mohamed Refai, and Ismail Ali Bassiouni "that it increases each party's tendency to view the other in a negative light; consequently, members of conflicting groups and units tend to exaggerate the differences between them, and these differences are interpreted in a negative manner.
- This creates negative feelings between individuals, leading to poor relations between individuals, groups and the organisation's management, which reduces cooperation and thus hinders collective collaborative work.
- It creates instability, as the pursuit of profit by the parties to the conflict, whatever the cost, carries a risk; that is, it causes differences to widen and unrest within the workplace.

As Mahmoud Suleiman Al-Amian noted regarding the effects of negative conflict, the following applies:

- It may drive each party to the conflict to take an extreme view of their own interests at the expense of the organisation's overall interests.
- It undermines morale and wastes time, effort and money, thereby reducing efficiency and effectiveness.
- It creates divisions between individuals and groups, leading to a loss of trust between management and staff and causing individuals to resort to acts of retaliation such as withholding information, refusing to cooperate and spreading false rumours; this falls under the category of poor communication.



- Productivity declines and performance stagnates.
- Paralysis in decision-making is accompanied by psychological stress, leading to frustration, uncertainty, a loss of decisiveness and weakened confidence.
- It is detrimental to the organisation's health and represents a lack of leadership skills.
- It diverts energy and effort away from the organisation's real mission. (Zouiter, Sarah, 2014)
- The behaviour of conflicting parties within organisations ends in open hostility and is characterised by the attribution of negative traits, poor communication and monitoring of others' reactions – natural consequences of conflict. This does not mean that conflict is devoid of positive effects that the organisation and management should capitalise on.

#### **B. The positive effects of conflict:**

The picture is not entirely negative; whilst it is true that conflict may tear an organisation apart, it can also lead to certain benefits. Among the positive effects of moderate, reasonable conflict are the following:

- Conflict reveals the problems that everyone wants to hide.
- Conflict may lead to the uncovering of facts and information that help diagnose some of the actual problems within the organisation.
- It serves to open up issues for discussion through direct confrontation.
- Conflict is fundamentally based on interaction between individuals; consequently, conflict is a form of communication, and resolving it suggests new and lasting ways of communicating.
- In his study 'Managing Organisational Conflict', Hussein Harim noted that conflict within an organisation maintains the vitality, self-criticism and creativity of groups, improves the quality of decisions, provides a means of raising issues in the open, and fosters a climate characterised by self-assessment and change.
- Conflict helps to satisfy the psychological needs of individuals, particularly those with aggressive tendencies.
- Conflict serves to motivate workers by bringing the differing interests of the parties to the fore, thereby becoming a source of creativity and innovation.
- It increases productivity and growth.
- It helps to clarify contentious issues between individuals.



- Proper management of organisational conflict transforms the energy generated by conflict into a force and impact that takes on a positive rather than a negative character. This does not mean eliminating conflict, but rather utilising it to channel this energy and the ideas of the parties involved into positive outcomes for the organisation and its members. (Zouiter, Sarah, 2014)
- Positive effects of conflict often manifest between organisations, whilst negative effects occur within the work group, and this is what will be studied. (Zouiter, Sarah, 2014)

#### **09- Methods of dealing with organisational conflict:**

There are several methods, including the following:

##### **A. Avoidance:**

This method is adopted when there is no desire for cooperation between the organisational unit and the other unit with which it is in conflict, Furthermore, the unit is passive and defensive, lacking any clarity in its demands or in the methods for resolving the conflict. This situation arises when there is no prior connection or cooperation between the two conflicting units. Consequently, the solution here is to leave the problem unresolved, to ignore it, or to postpone it, as if time alone will resolve it or the problem will resolve itself. When both parties wish to temporarily freeze the situation, avoiding a solution is the most appropriate course of action. The situation may also indicate a desire on the part of both units not to resolve the issue, even if this leads to its escalation later on, which may necessitate intervention at a higher organisational level at a later stage. Therefore, this approach must be used with caution and only in the most limited of circumstances.

##### **B. Accommodation (Adaptation):**

In this approach, we find that there is moderate cooperation from the unit despite its defence and failure to meet its demands. Consequently, the unit may be willing to accept any solution and adapt to it; the unit exerts pressure on itself to accept the first solution presented to it and attempts to adapt to it.

Consequently, the unit, at its moderate level of cooperation, responds and reluctantly submits to the solution proposed by the other unit, which is often stronger than the first unit.



### **C. Surrender:**

When an organisational unit is willing to cooperate to resolve the problem but is weak in its demands, it is expected to surrender at the first sign of pressure or demands from the other unit with which it is in conflict. The reason for the lack of firm demands lies in the weaknesses of the first unit, including the weakness of the manager in charge of the unit, the existence of compelling circumstances regarding operations, resources and subordinates, and the unit's complete dependence on the other unit with which it is in conflict. (Zuhair Boujemaa Shalabi, 2010)

Consequently, it is easier to capitulate due to a lack of demands of its own and a willingness to accept any form of solution; capitulation comes more easily and quickly if the opposing unit possesses influence, power and control, and is capable of attacking and imposing its will.

### **D. Competition:**

When a unit is unwilling to cooperate and does not wish to build bridges of understanding, and furthermore is decisive in what it wants and clear in its demands, it enters the arena of conflict with a sense of defiance, prepared to bear any consequences (whether for gain or loss). If the manager is adamant due to a lack of cooperation and insists on their demands, they may win the round; however, if the manager of the other unit is uncooperative, adamant and domineering, this may lead to undesirable consequences. and the unit attempting to resolve the conflict, whilst in a position of non-cooperation and clarity and decisiveness regarding its own demands, must establish ethical guidelines for discussion and dispute resolution with other units.

### **E. Compromise:**

When a unit is in a moderate state of cooperation and is clear and decisive in its demands, it tends towards moderation in resolving problems and conflicts. It tries to focus on points of agreement rather than points of disagreement and attempts to persuade the other party of this. Compromise is an attempt to ease tensions between conflicting units. For example, if the first unit succeeds in winning oversight of a project or programme against larger units, the first unit tends, after its victory, to defuse the atmosphere with the other units by convincing

them of its requests and how these requests can help the other units, and how the first unit's victory benefits everyone and serves the public interest.

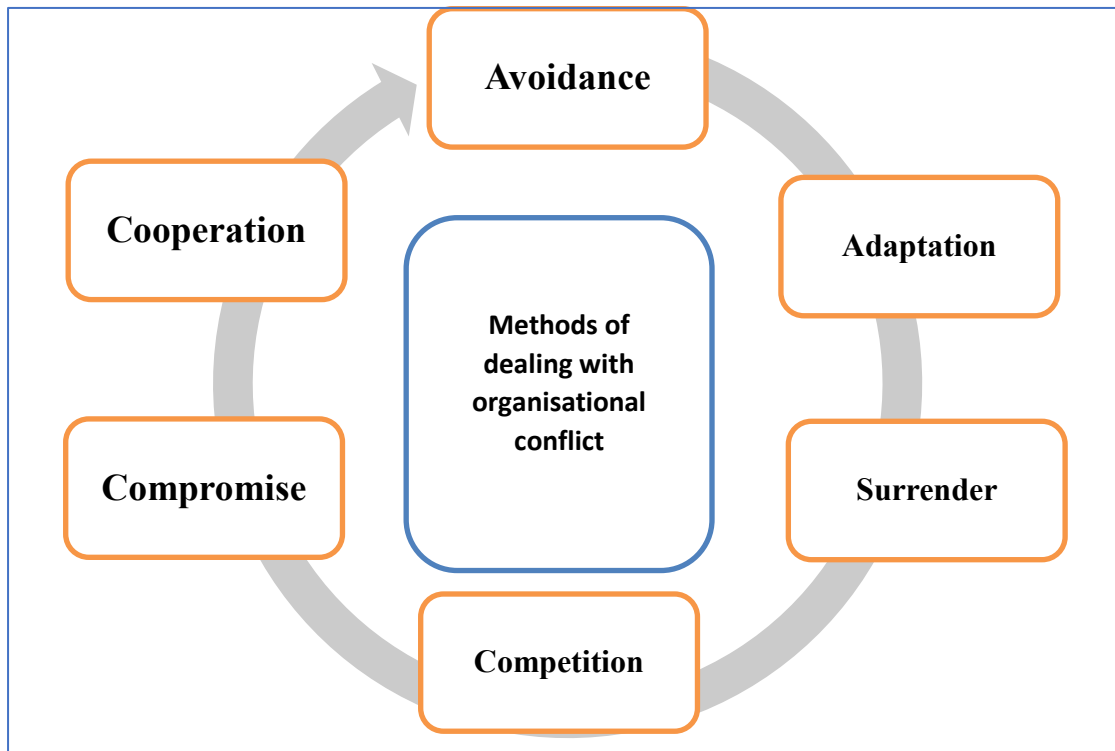


Figure 2 illustrates methods of dealing with organisational conflict

#### **F. Cooperation:**

The unit tends to attempt to resolve problems and engage with the other party to reach a solution, provided the necessary conditions are met. The organisational unit has clear demands; nevertheless, it is very willing to cooperate with the opposing party and demonstrates this willingness through its desire to sit at the negotiating table, and even more so through its desire to understand the other party and attempt to reach a win-win situation. (Shallabi Zuhair Boujemaa, 2010).

#### **10- Levels of organisational conflict:**

Although there is no consensus on the classification of organisational conflict or the identification of its levels, researchers agree on the following: We begin with the question: what are the levels of organisational conflict within organisations?



Al-Otaibi states that the organisation's management must intervene during conflict in two situations: (André Szilaky and Mark Wallace, translated by Abu al-Qasim Ahmad, 1991)

- **The first case:** if the level of conflict exceeds the specified or desired level, it is the duty of management to intervene to reduce it to the desired level.
- **The second case:** if conflict generally falls below the desired level, management must then intervene to stimulate conflict and raise it to the desired level.

From the above, it is clear that organisational conflict has three levels:

- a) The desired level of conflict.
- b) A level of conflict higher than the desired level.
- c) A level of conflict lower than the desired level.

The desirable level is referred to as the 'optimal level of conflict'.

The following table illustrates the three levels of organisational conflict:

Source (Amin Fouad Al-Sarmagi, 1979)

Situation	Level of conflict	Consequences of conflict	Organisational characteristics	Effectiveness of the organisation
A	None or low	Harmful	Apathy, rigidity, slow adaptation, lack of good ideas, absence of challenge	Low
B	Optimal	Beneficial	Vitality, self-criticism, adaptability, seeking solutions to problems, positive drive towards the goal.	High
C	High	Harmful	Random, lack of cooperation, conflicting activities, difficulty in coordination.	Low

#### 11- Models of organisational conflict:

Many researchers have attempted to develop several models to explain the phenomenon of organisational conflict, namely: (Mahdi Hussein Zouliev, Ali Mohammed Omar Al-Adailah, 1994)

##### A. The Conflict Process Model:

This model attempts to understand the phenomenon of conflict by studying the different stages through which a conflict situation passes, and by examining the impact of each stage on the next. From this perspective, conflict becomes a continuous process. This model is



considered useful when there is a desire to understand the events of organisational conflict and to intervene directly in these events.

#### **B. The Structural Model of Conflict:**

This model focuses on the pressures and constraints that shape a conflict situation, viewing the behaviour of each party to the conflict as a response to these pressures. There are four groups of factors or constraints that shape the conflict situation, namely:

- The conflicts and behavioural tendencies of the parties to the conflict, which reflect their respective personalities.
- The social pressures and constraints faced by the parties to the conflict, which arise from their surrounding environment; the most significant of these pressures are those exerted by the groups to which the parties belong and by other neutral groups.
- The structure of the parties' motivations and the degree of conflict between them.
- The rules and procedures governing interaction between the parties to the conflict, alongside the procedures and rules for a third party to intervene between them.

This model is known as the structural model, as these pressures and constraints are characterised by relative stability or slow change. This model is considered useful in situations where there is a desire to restructure the conflict situation to facilitate certain patterns of behaviour.

#### **C. The Systems Model:**

This model is based on the premise that conflict can have both positive and negative outcomes, depending on how it is managed. The conflict system consists of three elements:

- System inputs, which are the sources of conflict, including competition for scarce resources and conflicting goals.
- The various methods and approaches used to deal with the conflict.
- System outputs, which are the outcomes of the conflict, whether positive or negative.

#### **12- Conflict in Islam:**

Allah, the Exalted, said: 'And if your Lord had willed, He would have made mankind a single community, but they will not cease to differ except for those on whom your Lord has mercy. And for this He created them, and the word of your Lord has been fulfilled: "I will fill Hell with Paradise and all mankind"' (Surah Hud, verses 118–119).



Exegetes have differed as to what the demonstrative pronoun refers to in the words of the Almighty: ‘And for that He created them.’ Some have said that it refers to the diversity, that is: ‘He created them so that they might differ’. Others maintained that the demonstrative pronoun refers to mercy, that is, ‘He created them so that He might have mercy on them’. Still others held that the demonstrative pronoun refers to both, meaning: ‘He created them so that they might differ and so that He might have mercy on those who follow the right path.’ (Zuhair Boujemaa Shalabi, 2010)

And He, the Exalted, said: “And among His signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the diversity of your languages and colours; indeed, in that are signs for those who know.” Surah Ar-Rum, verse (22).

God, the Exalted, created the children of Adam with different physical forms and made them diverse in their languages and colours, and He varied their beliefs and creeds. Therefore, the preceding verses indicate that differences among people are inevitable and natural occurrences; Islam regards disagreement as an acceptable and natural human phenomenon. (Al-Qahtani, Salim Saeed and Yusuf Hilmi Shihada, 2001)

This is the view taken by modern management thought, namely that differences are a natural occurrence between individuals, and that management must intervene to deal with these differences. Referring to the Islamic approach to dealing with differences, we find that Islam does not leave differences without a reference point; rather, Allah the Almighty says: ‘If you disagree about anything, refer it to Allah and the Messenger, if you believe in Allah and the Last Day. That is better and more suitable for interpretation.’ Surah An-Nisa’, verse (59).

There are many types of disagreement, some of which we shall address:

**A. Diversity of opinion:**

This is where every opinion or statement is correct, and the difference between the two statements does not necessitate the rejection of one of them, such as the differences between the four schools of jurisprudence.

**B. Contradictory disagreement:**

This is where each statement or opinion contradicts the other, necessitating the invalidation of the other’s view. Contradictory disagreement is more severe than diverse



disagreement because the two opposing views are mutually exclusive, making division and conflict more likely.

- As for disagreement in terms of whether it is acceptable or reprehensible, it is divided into two categories:

- **Acceptable disagreement:** This is divided into two parts:

- **Commendable disagreement:** such as the disagreement between Muslims and polytheists.
- **Reasonable disagreement:** such as differences of opinion where disagreement is permissible.

#### D. **Reprehensible disagreement:**

This is that which leads to division, leads to evil and causes enmity. Islam has commanded unity and the rejection of division. Allah, the Exalted, said: ‘And hold fast, all together, to the rope of Allah, and do not be divided’ (Surah Al-Imran, verse 103).

He also said: “And obey Allah and His Messenger, and do not dispute, lest you fail and your strength depart; and be patient, for Allah is with those who are patient.” Surah Al-Anfal, verse (46).

And the Prophet (peace be upon him) said, emphasising the necessity of the community: “And hold fast to the community, for Allah is with the community” (Muhammad Lutfi Rashid, 1997).

Therefore, one must understand the nature of the disagreement or conflict and recognise its type, for most disagreements are of a diverse nature. This explains the differences among the most virtuous of the Companions, may Allah be pleased with them, to the extent that the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, would supplicate, saying: ‘O Allah, Lord of Gabriel, Michael and Raphael, Creator of the heavens and the earth, Knower of the unseen and the seen, You judge between Your servants in matters wherein they differ. Guide me to the truth in matters wherein they differ, by Your permission. Verily, You guide whom You will to the straight path.’ (Zuhair Boujemaa Shalabi, 2010)

#### **13- The Islamic Approach to Managing Disagreement (Conflict):**

Islamic tradition uses the term ‘disagreement’ rather than ‘conflict’ when addressing this subject. The Islamic approach to managing disagreement is based on minimising the occurrence of disagreements to an acceptable level by following two methods of dealing with disagreement:



**A. The first approach: the preventive approach, which involves:**

limiting the factors that influence the character of a Muslim individual and contribute to the emergence of conflicts and disputes, such as:

- prohibiting ill-will towards others, spying, backbiting and slander. Allah, the Exalted, says: ‘O you who have believed, avoid much suspicion; indeed, some suspicion is sin. And do not spy on one another or backbite one another. Would any of you like to eat the flesh of his brother when he is dead? You would detest it. And fear Allah; indeed, Allah is Accepting of Repentance and Merciful.’ Surah al-Hujurat, verse 12.
  - The prohibition of backbiting. Allah, the Exalted, said: “And do not obey every slanderer and defamer \* who goes about spreading slander.” Surah Al-Qalam, verse 11.
  - Prohibition of Mocking and Disdain by a Muslim Towards His Brother Allah, the Exalted, said: “O you who have believed, let not a people ridicule another people; perhaps they may be better than them, nor let women ridicule other women; perhaps they may be better than them. And do not defame one another, nor call one another by offensive nicknames. Wretched is the name of disobedience after faith. And whoever does not repent—those are the wrongdoers.” Surah Al-Hujurat, verse (11).
- Prohibition of injustice: Allah says: “And do not think that Allah is unaware of what the wrongdoers do. Indeed, He is delaying them for a Day when eyes will stare in horror.” Surah Ibrahim, verse 42.
- Prohibition of lying. Allah says: “Indeed, Allah does not guide one who is extravagant and a liar.” Surah Ghafir, verse 28.
  - Strengthening the spirit of love and cooperation among individuals and rejecting discord and division. Responding with kindness to reduce discord among individuals. Allah, the Exalted, says: “And a good deed is not equal to a bad deed. Repel [evil] with that which is better; then the one between whom and you was enmity will become as though he were a close friend.” Surah Fussilat, verse (34).
  - Fostering a spirit of brotherhood. Allah, the Exalted, said: “The believers are but brothers, so make peace between your brothers and fear Allah that you may receive mercy.” Surah Al-Hujurat, verse (10).



- Fostering a spirit of cooperation: Allah, the Exalted, says: “And cooperate in righteousness and piety, but do not cooperate in sin and aggression. And fear Allah; indeed, Allah is severe in punishment.” Surah Al-Ma’idah, verse 2.
- Fulfilling the Covenant Allah, the Exalted, said: “And fulfil the covenant of Allah when you have made a covenant, and do not break your oaths after you have confirmed them, and you have made Allah your guarantor. Indeed, Allah knows what you do.” Surah An-Nahl, verse (91).
- Fostering a spirit of love: The Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, said: “By the One in Whose hand is my soul, you will not enter Paradise until you believe, and you will not believe until you love one another. Shall I not tell you of something which, if you do it, you will love one another? Spread peace amongst yourselves.” (54)
- Rejecting discord and fostering a spirit of cooperation. Allah, the Exalted, said: “And do not be like those who became divided and differed after clear proofs had come to them; for them is a great punishment.” Surah Al-Imran, verse (105).
- Fostering affection and compassion among individuals. Allah says: “And among His signs is that He created for you mates from among yourselves, that you may find tranquillity in them; and He has put love and mercy between you. Indeed, in that are signs for a people who reflect.” Surah Ar-Rum, verse (21).

#### **B. The second approach:**

the therapeutic approach. Resolving disputes by referring to the Book of Allah and the Sunnah of His Prophet, peace be upon him, regarding the subject of the dispute. The source of disagreement on contentious issues was attributed to the words of Allah: “If you differ over anything, refer it to Allah and the Messenger, if you believe in Allah and the Last Day. That is better and more suitable for final determination.” Surah An-Nisa’, verse 59.

Harmony, love and the brotherhood of faith governed the conduct of those who disagreed; thus Ibn Taymiyyah said: “As for differences in rulings, they are too numerous to be regulated; and if every time two Muslims differed over something they were to sever ties, there would remain neither unity nor affection amongst the Muslims.” 55.

Consultation: Allah says: “And those who respond to their Lord and establish prayer, and their affairs are [decided] by mutual consultation among them, and they spend from what We have provided them.” Surah Ash-Shura, verse (38).



- The pursuit of common higher goals Allah says: “And let there be among you a community who call to good, enjoin what is right, and forbid what is wrong; and it is they who are the successful ones.” Surah Al-Imran, verse 104
- The use of a mediator: Allah, the Exalted, says: ‘And if you fear a breach between them, appoint an arbitrator from his family and an arbitrator from her family; if they wish to reconcile, Allah will bring about harmony between them; for Allah is ever All-Knowing of their affairs.’ Surah An-Nisa’, verse 35.
- Appeasement, as the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: “The strong man is not the one who wrestles well, but the strong man is the one who controls himself when he is angry.” (Al-Ruwaini, Abdullah Awad, 2003)
- Resorting to force if the previous approaches have been exhausted. Allah, the Exalted, says: “And if two factions of the believers fight, then make peace between them. But if one of them transgresses against the other, then fight the one that transgresses until it submits to the command of Allah. If it submits, then make peace between them with justice and be equitable. Indeed, Allah loves those who are equitable.” Surah Al-Hujurat, verse (9).

### **Conclusion:**

Organisational conflict is a phenomenon found in all organisations, regardless of the nature of their work. It has both negative and positive effects within the organisation that influence the performance of the individual and the organisation, and it can occur at desirable levels, sometimes at less than desirable levels, and at times at undesirable levels. This depends on the type of conflict present on the one hand, and on the forms in which it manifests itself on the other.

Organisational conflict occurs within an organisation through specific stages, beginning in an unclear form and then developing to become apparent through various behaviours and actions of individuals. Like other social and behavioural phenomena, it has been addressed by numerous schools of thought and theories. It is a natural phenomenon within an organisation that must be accepted if it is under control, as modern theories emphasise the necessity of positive conflict and its activation, as it leads to innovation, change and development. There are also models that explain the occurrence of organisational conflict, the most important of which is the conflict process model, which is used to understand and track the stages of conflict



within the organisation in order to avoid its negative consequences. There is also the structural model of conflict, which is used when there is a desire to restructure the conflict situation to facilitate certain behavioural patterns, and the systems model, which is useful in selecting the appropriate approach to dealing with conflict.

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