
UNIT 3 CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

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3.0 OBJECTIVES

After completing this unit, you should be able to:

- explain the meaning of conflict and enumerate the causes of conflict situations in individuals and organisations;
- identify the sources of conflict in nursing practice; and
- describe different types of conflicts commonly observed in individuals, groups and organisations.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Organizations are made for people, by people and of people and wherever there are people certain problems are inevitable as each individual is different from other in terms of goals, interests, **ambitions**, abilities, problems etc.

When people work together there are both positive as well as negative results. In other words 'production' is accompanied by challenges and problems. It is very difficult to **achieve** the quality or standards easily without working hard for it. Despite the hard work people face too many other influencing factors such as co-ordination, co-operation, adequate supplies, time, sufficient funds etc. and to work to live peacefully. These problems are unpleasant conflicting situations which result in frustration, anger, hostile emotions and so on and so forth. In order to achieve something or more also end up in unpleasant feelings. The unpleasant **thing** is nothing but a 'conflict' which is **harmful** to the individual or institution/organisation. In the following section we are going to discuss about conflict management, its sources and areas of conflict in nursing and classification and types of conflicts and conflict management approaches.

3.2 HISTORY OF CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

Here you find the history of conflict management and a few examples of conflict management by the nurses.

Conflicts or grievances in an organisation are usually **managed** through **meetings** and discussions. If the authority exercises a dominating approach, the conflicting situation may be made to disappear and a win - loose **strategy** may prevail in the **organisation** which favours the management. On the contrary, the workers decide to **overcome** the conflict or settle their grievances through a collective approach may **form** unions and try to **represent** their problems for solution. If union takes the upper hand, **then** also a win-loose **strategy** prevails. Instead of having a losing result, a negotiation based on sound principles may help both the parties to come to an agreement, acceptable for both, the management as well as the workers.

Hospitals having unions followed the foot steps of industries. **Employees** represent **their** problems through the representatives of their union for a 'collective bargaining' whereby the conflicts and problems are discussed and settled through a bargain **between employer** and workers collectively. Collective bargaining itself is an arrangement which **leads** to an agreement or contract fixed by both the parties to follow for a specified time period with the help of decided terms and conditions.

A systematic application of conflict management through the above method was initiated in the 19th century and Great Britain is known to be the home of collective bargaining. The need for this arose due to industrial conflicts leading to trade union movements.

In India, to regulate labour management relations in the **textile** industry in **Ahmedabad** (Gujarat), the first collective bargaining agreement came into existence under **the** leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. **Organized** trade union movement are known in **India** from the **time** of first world war.

The words like 'Labour Court', Associations, Councils, **Trade** Unions etc. are known to be concerned for collective bargaining procedures for conflict resolution.

Hospital workers 'Union and Nurses' Union are also involved many times in conflict management process. Sometimes a collective approach is seen where the Union **and** Association come to an agreement for achieving a common goal of the team or profession.

The conflict management should always aim for bringing improvement to the organisation through solving the grievances of individuals working in and for the **organisation**.

3.3 DEFINITION OF TERMS

Now you will learn about the various definitions and terms of conflict.

Conflict

- Definition : It is a disagreement between two persons or two groups and described as a discord due to differences in ideas, values, beliefs, interests of two or **more** people. Conflict is also defined as a clashing idea and differences within an individual.
- Robbins, S.P. defines conflict as a 'process in which an individual purposefully **make** a concerted effort to offset of another individual by some form of **blockage** that **causes** frustration to the latter in accomplishing his goals or **furtherance** of his interests'.

Collective Bargaining

- It is a **process** or procedure of discussion and negotiation between two parties to resolve the disputes **or** differences with or without the intervention of third party to come to an agreement.
- It may also be **defined** as an arrangement whereby the conflicts and problems are discussed and settled through a bargain between an employer and employees **collectively**.

Collaboration

- It is a kind of social behaviour which show the co-operation between individuals or groups and members who work jointly to accomplish common goals.
- It is one of the strategies used to resolve conflict with the help of social interactions.

Grievance

It is defined as any dissatisfaction arising in an employee out of something connected with the organization, which he/she feels or thinks as unfair or unjust. This may be expressed and may or may not be valid.

After knowing the meaning of the related words of conflict, you need to understand the conflict process or theory, to realize its possible consequence to individuals or to organizations.

Check Your Progress 1

1) Define conflict.

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2) Define collective bargaining.

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3.4 CONFLICT PROCESS/THEORY

By now you have already learnt about the definition of conflict. Now you will learn about conflict process:

- Conflict is a term related with tension or stress which leads to change in behaviour or expressions. These could be hostility, negative attitude, aggression, misunderstanding, etc. Conflict is also a state of special kind of competition.
- Conflict is also described as a condition which is responsible for breakdown, or which creates difficulty for decision making or which delays the performance leading to tension and frustration.
- Conflict is an inevitable process in organisations which has both dysfunctional and functional consequences. Functional consequences lead to creativity and innovations and dysfunctional consequences lead to slowing or stoppage of work. It is also necessary to remember that certain conflicts are 'constructive' in nature in other words with the help of 'conflict' in mind people try to work hard or strive for better results in a process of resolving the conflict.
- Conflicts may act as positive inspirations. Competitions in organisations leading to conflicts help to improve the production or to achieve better results.
- On the contrary persistent conflicting situations for a longer period, resulting in stress

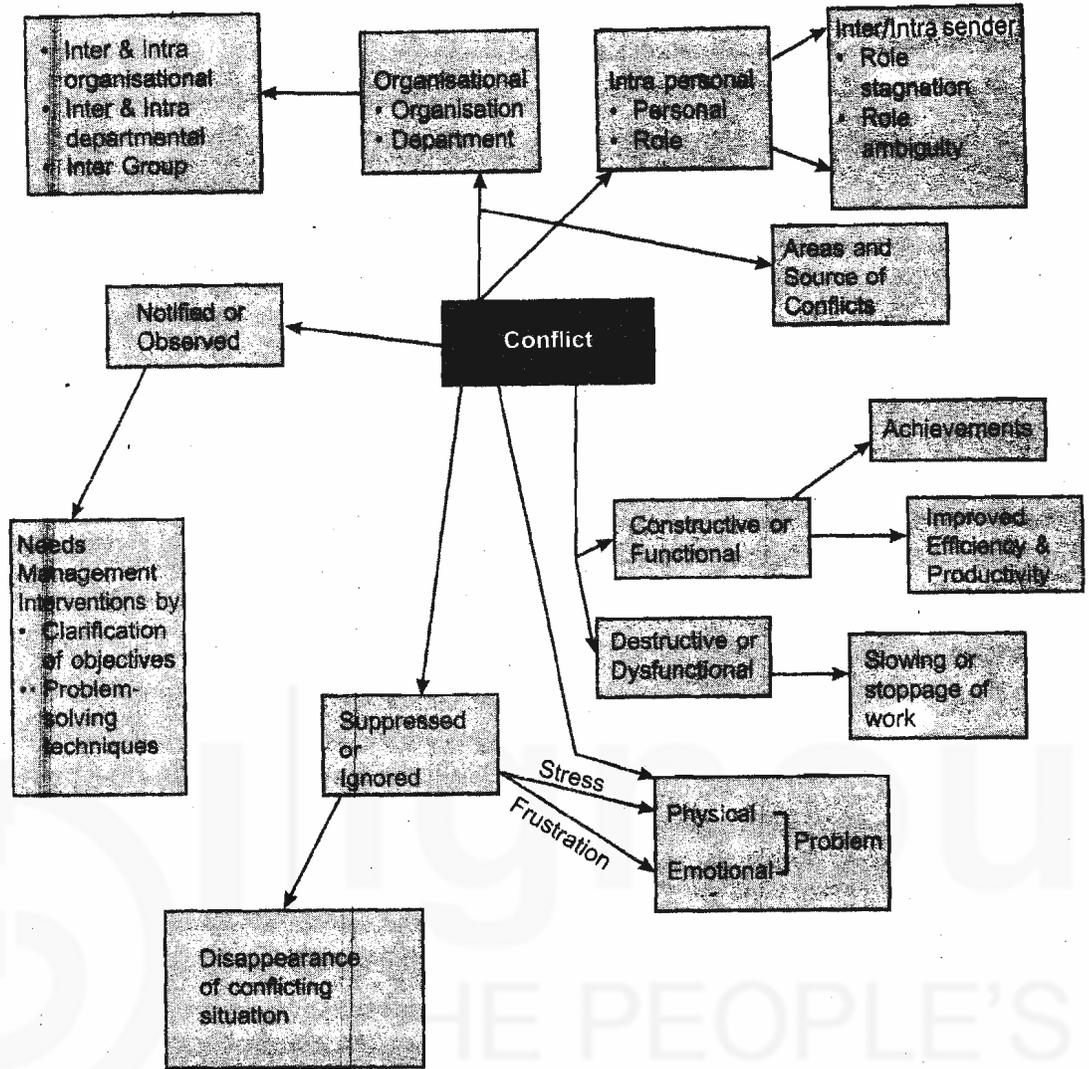


Fig. 3.1: Conflict Process/Theory

- In nursing profession, conflicts at work are terribly harmful not only to the individual but also to the organisation. Out of all they affect the quality of service endangering patients' welfare.
- Conflict is inevitable in organisations and conflicts help in individual personal gain, improves prestige to the person who succeeds and also help as motivation or incentives for **creativity**. The conflict to some extent in an individual or a group helps to function efficiently or conflict should be managed effectively instead of ignoring or suppressing as suppressing conflict is detrimental to the improvement or **efficiency**. A conflicting situation is a warning to the management to initiate appropriate intervention.
- Conflicts which are like fire flare up with some reactions and after sometime they gradually disappear as the time passes. People usually wait for the time to pass. This is an avoiding approach. But on the other hand conflicts if they are buried within the individual, results in stress and stress related problems leading to physical as well as mental health.

The above discussion might have given you some insight that conflicts which are not always pleasant may clash interests and which may lead to stress and frustrations.

After understanding the meaning of conflict and to find out an appropriate method of resolving the conflict, it becomes essential for the nurse managers to have a clear understanding of the following aspects.

- Causes, area and sources' of conflict in **nursing**
- Classification and types of conflict
- Nature of conflict – constructive or destructive

3.5 AREAS OF CONFLICT IN NURSING

In this section we will learn about conflict in nursing situations and you are already aware that in nursing areas of conflict is more but hope that after reading this unit you will be able to resolve the conflict which is arising in day to day life. This section also deals with sources of conflicts.

The social change and expectations of people to keep pace with the changes are resulting in different types of conflicts. Women's empowerment, rapidly changing living standards, advancing scientific knowledge and technological explosion etc. are increasing the need for more qualified nurses with specializations.

The changing expectations of consumers of care and advancing knowledge and changing expectations from health team members, modern technology and advancing research are some of the causes in general.

Cultural and economic factors are also some of the provoking causes.

Motivational factors within the individual or group to grow or prosper also become important causes for conflicts.

Promotion and reservation policies and limited opportunities to progress are some of the examples for frustration. Even though motivation is **strong** the hindrances to achieve the goal dominate, forcing the individual to drop the plans or suppress the motivational factors, Depression, rejection, withdrawal, anger etc. are a few common expressions of frustration.

The common areas of conflict especially in nursing are:

- Changing values and attitudes of people affecting nursing service.
- Awareness and increased demands raised in relation to standards of care by consumers or care receivers.
- Changing living standards in the society enforcing changing standards of living.
- Need for higher education and specialization .
- Need for favourable working conditions.
- Adequate salaries and allowances (Economic),
- Issues of uniform and its maintenance.
- Concern for improving image and professionalism.

3.5.1 Sources of Conflict

Each and every conflict has a definite source, a reason. Some of them are:

1) Scarcity of Resources

To work smoothly and effectively, people need appropriate and sufficient resources. In an organization, resources like human, financial, physical and material are essential to do the specified job. Many a times one or many of these are lacking or less, leading to extra work or inefficient work. People work with low level of job satisfaction if they **are** paid less for the job. Or there is unequal distribution or delegation of duties and responsibilities because of shortage of manpower of certain category.

Mostly people work for sometime with less or lack of resources but if the situation is prolonged and there is no intervention, conflicts increase and work gets affected.

2) Competition for Resources

Competitions whether it is an individual or organization leads to positive or negative repercussions. In organizations, this becomes an important source of conflict if it is budget allocation. Many times, people get the resources easily through different means. For

be overlooked because the other departmental heads could procure the resources through competition or convincing the authorities.

If the nursing service department does not receive the resources genuinely needed, the whole department experiences difficulties leading to conflict and frustration.

The same thing applies to human resources in relation to sanctions. In some institutions, the shortage of manpower is tolerated and workers are overburdened because the allocation of funds are utilized on competition basis. One sided negotiations may make somebody benefited and on the other side another person/department is subject to conflict.

A proper planning, for proper allocation of resources may help to reduce this kind of conflict.

3) Inadequate Job Descriptions/Specifications

Inadequate and unambiguous job descriptions may create difficulties for nursing personal. The stress would get aggravated if people are expected to do the job of those below their ranks. They may refuse, retaliate or if at all they do the quality may suffer. The manager would also be in a conflicting situation to manage the human resources without a clear-cut job specifications (job descriptions details are discussed in another unit).

4) Conflict Arising from Comparisons or Differences in Work Characteristics

Improper allocation of duties, partial and personal behaviour and incentives without proper judgments create unpleasant situations among workers leading to conflict.

The strengths and weaknesses are to be identified and appropriate judgment has to be made for proper recognition of work. The differences should be explained in terms of the quantity and the type of work assigned and the type of resources involved.

For example, in an organisation it should be clearly differentiated who does what, how and at what level. No one should be degraded or ridiculed. Instead of drawing comparisons, the cases have to be examined in details for the type and quality of the rank accomplished to the plan for improvements. The process of differentiating the work characteristics is found to be the usual cause of conflict in organizations.

For example, a ward has nurses with different qualification and experience. Depending on their experience, abilities and knowledge, the work should be assigned and the persons with less qualification should be supervised and should be motivated to learn from those with higher qualification and experience. Comparison of accomplished tasks by the manager for bringing improvements may be good to the department or organization but the comparisons should not show that somebody is less than the other. These things will lead to conflicts.

5) Deferring Personal Value and Aims

Different people work in organization with different aims, objectives and values. For example some managers like to impose disciplinary measures but some others may be casual.

Similarly people work with different values. For some completion of work means hard work but for others completion of work systematically showing a quality in its result is a hard work. The best example is maintaining professional standards. The word standard has different meaning for different individuals. Each one has different levels. Nurses often do face with this type of dilemma and do not achieve complete job satisfaction.

In this section you have learnt the meaning/areas of conflict and how to identify the sources of conflict in nursing.

Check Your Progress 2

List down the sources of conflict.

1)
2)
3)
4)
5)

3.5.2 Reality Shock and Burn Out

When you are studying about conflict and its management, you are expected to know what is 'Reality shock and Burn out' in nurses as these are to **be** managed carefully by nurse managers to **keep** the nurses healthy and efficient.

When **the** desires or ambitions of an individual do not match with that of **the** job role or **placement** etc., then the condition is said to be conflict within a person. Try to **recollect** your **experiences**. Sometimes you do not like to be posted in a particular area or do not want to do a particular job which you do not like or feel like doing. But you might have **carried** it out **not willingly** or happily. You might have experienced a **conflict** or frustration of felt as if you **were** forced to carry out that job. That means you did experience an **unpleasant** situation due to incompatible objectives and desires.

Conflict as though it looks to be one single word has many **varieties/types** depending on its cause, place and **person** and caused by what, where and in whom. Further discussions **explain** its classification and types. One of the related conflicts rather a serious **condition** in **helping profession** is Reality Shock and Bum-out. You might have heard people speaking about **this** in nursing practice. Before studying in detail the types of conflict, let us understand this condition which **process/stages** of a conflict.

These related conflicts are mostly seen in people in helping professions. Nursing is one of **them** in which nurses face reality situations which are away from their professional ideals. They work **under** different situations with a kind of forced adjustments or compromises. What **they** have **learnt** and are interested to practice remain as a dream as the existing situations do not **match** with their interests and desires. These 'shocks' reduce their motivation and **inhibit** staff development.

Reality Shock

Reality **Shock** is **commonly** seen in those nurses who are new recruits and who have **recently** left the **school** or college of nursing. What they have learnt look to be obsolete and impractical to practice. The ideals of the nursing profession and the real world show a lot of **discrepancy**. The expected practice in the real situation becomes a big conflicting situation, in **other** words resulting in 'Reality Shock'.

Nursing students trained in different set ups with varied standards in addition to 'reality shock' **face** **more** problems. It is a fact that even-though there are **specified/prescribed** standards of **nursing** education, the preparations vary from one institution to another or from **one** state to **other** resulting in different standards.

In addition to these the hospital setup, facilities, policies etc. do not help the nurses to follow **the prescribed standards/ideologies**. Hence 'Reality Shock' is an eternal **problem** to be **resolved** in our present system which has increased population and type of facilities.

It is always **necessary** to prepare nurses to face this reality shock ahead of time explaining the **problems**, practices and availabilities. So that the intensity of the conflict could be **reduced** to some **extent**. A new comer's **mistakes** initially may be excused or overlooked. But later on she **has** to try to **meet** the expectations of others which puts **her-into** a terrible 'conflict'.

'Reality Shock' may **lead** to unsuccessful coping efforts.

- 1) **Some** may give up their professional goals and ideals completely and stick to organizations operative goals. This may reduce their conflict but they may become less effective practitioners. Their goals and needs are put behind.
- 2) **Sonic** may give up their ideals and also do not try to adopt **organizations** goals. But **they** try to do something which is necessary to **earn** their livelihood.

Think of **those people** who neither have any of their ideals nor do according to the **expectations** of the **organizations**. But they just try to complete some work for the sake of doing and **complete** their time. The expected standards etc. are not their **concern**.

The **other category** may perform exactly according to the set goals and standards of the **organization**. **matching** their own **goals**. They may face less conflict.

- 3) In other rare situations, the workers try to find such type of organizations which meet their **professional** goals. They tend to change **from** one institution to other for **getting** professional and personal satisfaction.
- 4) In some: rare situations, a few **members** try to leave their jobs or change their profession. With this approach they try to **overcome** reality shock.

Method of Resolving this Conflict – Leaders Intervention

Reality shock is a preventable one. Interviewing process can reduce many future problems. The employee needs **to** be thoroughly informed about the organizations work environment and policies, especially the role expectations.

- Orientation programmes, followed by in-service education programmes help to reduce **the** conflict.
- Staff meetings **from time to time** will certainly try to bring down the rate of conflicting situations. Staff meetings allow the **members** share the ideas and problems and help **them** to identify solutions from **useful suggestions**.
- **Helping** the new staff to work with seniors who are 'role models' also help to reduce **this** conflict to some extent.
- **The** new **staff/recruit** should try to understand clearly the organizational, **operative** goals so that she **can** adjust early and easily to the reality.
- Working **closely** with those role models by utilizing all the **opportunities** to learn will help the new employee adjust well to the situation.

Burn Out

This is a term used often for a state of exhaustion, in which an individual feels that all her/his energies are depleted or decreased.

A best example for this **is** – nurses who are working in an intensive care unit. They come in contact with serious and terminally ill patients and are **taxed** with extra demands of knowledge, skills and advancing technologies. The **type** of service with increased alertness and **with** disturbing noises etc, are tolerated and managed by only some employees for a **certain** specified period of time. Later on the exhaustion may lead to emotional and physical problems, **resulting** in burn out or stress.

The managers have to identify the signs and **symptoms** of burnout as early as possible and should try to **help** them by rendering **appropriate help** to prevent the staff from entering into conflicts and frustration. If necessary their assignments and duties have to be modified after a thorough counseling.

3.6 CLASSIFICATION AND TYPES OF CONFLICT

Conflict may be classified under two categories:

1) Intra-personal Conflicts

These are limited to a single individual which are also **termed** as internalized conflicts. These are further divided into:

- i) Role Conflicts
- ii) Goal Conflicts

Role conflicts may be further classified as (a) Role ambiguity and (b) **Role overload** (c) Role isolation (d) Role stagnation and (e) Role erosion etc. Role conflict may be seen as intersender, intra-sender, inter-role, **person-role** etc. This is **explained** in details of types in the coming paragraphs.

Goal conflict arises in an individual when a person is **unable** to achieve his/her goal or **there** is a difference **between** the goals of self and **others**. Frustration is the result of non attainment of goals or inability to **accomplish the** role with **utmost** job and **personal**

satisfaction. Goal conflict is commonly seen when an individual has two or more options to choose to attain his/her goal. When a nurse is given a chance to choose one department from different favourable options, she faces a conflicting situation till she finally selects one after weighing pros and cons. Dwivedi, R.S. described this type as 'Approach - approach' conflict.

The second type of goal conflict 'Approach - avoidance' exists when the individual has to face positive and negative sides of goal achievement. A nurse may feel happy to secure promotion to a higher post as per her ambition but if the post demands her placement in a far off place from her residence, she would be forced to decide for a refusal. The goal either is changed completely or modified.

The last, third type of goal conflict, according to Dwivedi is 'Avoidance - avoidance' conflict where the individual is made to choose from both or more negative options (goals). For example, when a nurse is forced to work in a disliked department or place, she may take a decision to resign to escape from avoidance conflict. This conflict cannot avoid anxiety and frustration for getting entered into a stressful situation that is search for new job. If at all she decides to compromise with the present situation, she cannot work without stress as her goals are unfulfilled rather difficult to achieve.

2) Organizational Conflict

The common varieties of this conflict are interdepartmental, intra-departmental, inter-personal, hierarchical conflicts. Sometimes inter-group conflicts are frequently seen with a motive of achievement of different or same goals.

These types are written in detail in coming paragraphs.

Organizational conflicts may also be caused by different functions performed by different members of the organization whose goals vary in terms of productivity. In a hospital, the term quality of care may be understood differently by doctors and nurses. Similar to doctors and nurses, there would also be differences in the understandings of nurse-practitioners and nurse-researchers. These differences many a times lead to discussions and arguments and create conflict between two groups of the same profession or different professions.

Line-staff conflicts are also classified as one of the types of organizational conflict which are explained as 'vertical and horizontal' in the coming paragraphs.

Apart from the above types in an organizational setup there will be

- a) Status conflict - fighting for status and position
- b) Political conflict - creating 'politics' or unpleasant atmosphere by adopting favoritism policies or informal or unaccepted means.

To promote a person through bypassing or overlooking seniors is one of the examples to create political conflict. The above categories of classification are made more simple in the following as types.

Types of Conflict

- a) Structurally the conflict may be classified according to the relationship or hierarchy in the organization. They are either
 - i) Vertical or
 - ii) Horizontal

Horizontal conflicts are seen in the relationships where the people get into differences because of their authority and expertise and vertical conflicts result due to the power exerted by the managers.

- b) Conflict may be departmentalized as
 - i) Inter Departmental and
 - ii) Intra Departmental.

The cause is mostly due to non-cooperation, **interdependence** or **indifferences** related to goal achievement.

- c) Conflict is also classified according to the role performance of an individual which is otherwise known as 'Role conflict'. The following are **some of the types of role conflict**:

i) Intra-sender Conflict

The sender who sends conflicting instructions or **messages** or receives conflicting responses may enter into this type of conflict. In a ward **the departmental supervisor** may expect something and gives the instruction and in **return may receive** responses from the **incharges**, which are **unsatisfactory** to her. **She** would be in a position to face conflicting instructions and conflicting **responses** for which she may not be in a position to **decide** the right actions. **Getting the work done** with shortage of staff usually creates this **type of dilemma** for which the supervisor may be helpless to take appropriate action to **achieve** the quality of work.

ii) Inter-sender Conflict

When a person is **working** under too many heads, inter-sender conflict is common as each one's expectations differ putting an individual (subordinate) in a conflict.

iii) Inter-role Conflict

This type of conflict is more common in **individuals** who are expected to perform multiple roles or made responsible to work with **multiple** groups. **Women** employees face role conflict quite often with dual or multiple responsibilities at home as well as in working place.

iv) Person-role Conflict

This is a kind of stress within an individual which puts **her/him** in a conflict because the individual's values and needs may not **match with the actual practices** which the same individual is expected to perform. It happens in **real practice** that **some people** do **certain** things as a compulsion for which their values are suppressed.

- v) Interpersonal conflict is seen between two **individuals** holding the **same type** of responsibilities. Two ward-sisters want to see that their **wards/departments** are praised for which each one strives for better with a **competitive** approach, causing conflicts within to work for their wards. ■

- vi) Intergroup Conflicts – This is also very common where two groups work with different goals or for a same goal. Each group may work **for better** with a competitive approach resulting in more production or quality product. **Here the** conflict acts in a constructive way to improve the situation or to create a new thing etc.

vii) Role overload and Role ambiguity

Sometimes if the individual is not aware of her job **responsibilities** or made to work more, he or she would be in confused state resulting in frustration and conflict. This situation is mostly seen in new recruits who are not given proper job descriptions or orientation to their work. Some may even decide to leave the job in a serious frustrated state. Similarly when she or he is expected to overwork the person may not be able to cope up with the **demands within the** limited time and knowledge.

viii) Role stagnation

There are only few opportunities for learning and growth in **the** role.

ix) Role Isolation

Lack of linkage of one 'role' with other role' creates a feeling of isolation

x) Role erosion

The responsibilities of a role are given to some other roles.

xi) Role clarity

Role clarity is an essential requirement to **perform** a job smoothly. Well defined and clearly written job descriptions and properly assigned duties and responsibilities may help to reduce this type of conflicts in an organization.

d) According to the effects the conflicts produce, they are also classified as

- i) Constructive or functional conflicts which lead to productive **results** and innovations.
- ii) Destructive or dysfunctional conflicts – They create tensions, delay the **performance** or increase the turn over.

In a single organization, these two are **common** and are influenced by the type of management, kind of working atmosphere and mainly the type of human relations existing between individuals and between departments. Competitive spirit is enhanced by rewards and incentives, a good example for constructive conflicts. Constructive conflicts are geared towards positive goal achievement. Competitive examinations for career **promotions** etc. which need lot of **efforts** help to achieve the desired objectives.

But the destructive conflicts are the ones which occupy prominent place in organizations. If the objectives and actions are not **agreed** upon among the **members** of the organizations, the conflict becomes worse and it will waste lot of time and effort in arguments and discussions. Sometimes they may also turn out as strikes etc. which are tough to resolve and collective bargaining may have to be the solution to resolve.

For example if the nurses want to give care according to the priority needs of the **clients/patients** and the ward sister believes in maintaining the beds neat and tidy and kept in order as priority, then there would be conflict between the objectives of **nurses** and the ward sister which may bring down the efficiency of the nurses. There may not be smooth atmosphere to work in a democratic way unless and until both the nurses and the ward sister come to common consensus. Otherwise this becomes a serious destructive conflict.

Sometimes if there are two units **competing** for better performance in which all the members of each unit work hard towards that goal to achieve the level of their satisfaction, it becomes constructive conflict.

Other related conflicts that are common to nursing profession are reality shock and burn out (discussed earlier).

Conflicts could be inter organizational or intra-organizational. Conflicts within an individual are studied by psychologists – the desires, frustrations due to unfulfilled desires and the individuals' reactions to frustration. Conflicts between individuals existing in an organizational set up may lead to conflicts of different type within an individual as each individual reacts differently to different situations varying in severity.

People becoming psychotic or **neurotic** is also a common observation, led by job and personal factors of stress etc.

Conflicts whatever the type it is it produces stress. Stress to some extent may be a motivating factor e.g. unless the student experience certain amount of stress, **she/he cannot perform well** in her/his examination. Stress makes a person to try for achieving something. But if the stress is felt beyond the tolerating limit, instead of motivating the individual, it brings down the morale, efficiency and may even bring unwanted or unexpected results which will further increase stress.

If the workers are pressed **too** hard to work in conflicting situation, the **production** would be lowered instead of increased or normal. For example if a staff nurse is worried about her child or family or some other problem in addition to this and is made to do overtime or work beyond her abilities to cope up with would certainly make her to feel that she cannot do even the **normal** amount of work which she was able to do before. Similarly the above example of staff nurses and ward sister tells us that Pressing the staff nurses to do according to the desires of the ward sister, instead of increasing the output or positive results will bring down the results not upto the expected standards.

After knowing that the **conflicts** are both constructive and destructive you can come to a conclusion that constructive conflicts help to achieve the goals and destructive conflicts act as obstacles to achieve the set goals.

Conflicts should be made to turn into problem-solving situations instead of losing the game situations. The actual goal or mission should not be made to disappear in the process of conflict resolution. This demands tremendous co-operation, understanding among individuals or units Involved in conflict resolution.

Check Your Progress 3

- 1) How conflict is generally classified?
 - a)
 - b)
- 2) What is role ambiguity? How does it differ from Role over-load?
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- 3) List down the types of organizational conflict.
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3.7 CONFLICT MANAGEMENT — APPROACHES

By this time you have become familiar with the definition, areas , classification and types of conflict. We are now proceeding to discuss about approaches of conflict management.

Matching the individuals objectives/desires with the objectives of the job or organization may be sometimes difficult which leads to conflict in individuals or between individuals.

When we talk about 'conflict' in organizations, we mean 'intra-organizational conflicts'. If the organization has to function smoothly in order to achieve its objectives, the conflicts need to be managed properly and promptly. The situation should not be allowed to become from bad to worse as the conflicting situation may be destructive to the organizational welfare.

3.7.1 Dealing with Conflict

A manager should achieve the desired standard/results in an organization is expected to create, control and avoid conflicts or conflicting situations. Unless and Until desired conflict is created, there may not be a sort of promotion in an organization. Performance appraisal, auditing and surprised supervision etc. are some of the examples which create desired conflict. The desired conflict is also a way of imposing control in an organization. That means controlling involves certain amount of desired conflict. Competitions are also desired conflicts which help to achieve the efficiency.

Conflict management can be done through:

- 1) Avoiding Unnecessary Conflict: It is important to assess the situation and anticipate the problems before a situation of conflict arises. Clear job descriptions and clarity in objectives will try to minimize conflicts in an organization.
- 2) Selection of a leader: A leader who is competent, knowledgeable, with power especially expert Dower who can convince the people may be selected to minimize or

to resolve **the** conflict. This is known as umpiring system of management. People try **to obey** the orders of a leader selected for managing the unit. If not all, **maximum try** to **abide** by the decisions taken by the boss, who is designated as boss by all. **He/she** is **expected** to know the **complete** situation, all the people who are working under **his/her** **guidance** and the decision taken should be for the **receipt/agreement** of the **maximum** people **involved** in the conflict. Then the burning issue may slowly cool down and **leaving** a win-loss situation. There is compromise between winning and losing for which the **people** become adjusted.

- 3) **Formation of Committees and Groups:** People with similar goals or activities are grouped **together** for achieving the goals. The committees through their **experts** may come closer with their unit and achieve their set goals. Each unit working for some goals in a positive way certainly reduces conflicts, increases the productivity to some extent. **Interdepartmental** meetings and activities certainly help the members of **departments** to achieve their goals. In a large **organization** or a **big** hospital there are **many departments**. Departments of the same nature, **e.g., surgical** will come **together** and plan for **their** activities etc. This may be different from **that** of Medical. **As** long as the work is **not affected** by third party, both medical and surgical departments will try their level best to achieve their specified goals. Their conflicts are mostly managed within the department of departmental committees.
- 4) **Separation of the Conflicting Parties;** to control the conflicting situation, the parties are separated. Transfers with mutual consent may be one of the examples. Between two departments, a liaison member or department tries to see that the conflicting **parties** are separated and allowed to carry out their activities. The liaison **member** brings the results from both the units for **further** assessment to see quality and quantity of the work of both and **takes** back the evaluative reports for improvement. There is **no direct** communication between two conflicting parties but the interaction is through a **committee** or an individual whose activities are agreed upon by both the units.

The supervisors in a department are the liaison **officers** between two wards. **i.e.** the ANS is an accepted authority to work as a liaison officer between two wards of the **department, e.g.** Medical, Surgical, Pediatrics etc. Who has a responsibility to compare **the** working results of each ward to achieve the overall objectives of the **department.**

3.7.2 Approaches to Conflict Situation

There are **several** approaches how the conflict situation is approached and action is taken

If the **objectives** for finding out the problems or situation are clearly stated and agreed upon by **the** members, then the action would be easy to resolve.

Types of approaches involved in conflict situation:

- 1) Objectives are agreed and actions are clear. With slight discussions, **things become** clear. **In other** words the action decided are agreed upon by those who are involved in **implementing** the action. (Participatory)
- 2) Objectives of **certain** actions are clear but the actions which have to be taken are not clear. **In other** words, **the** people are **not confident** or not properly **convinced** about the possible **outcomes** of the actions to be implemented. So the conflict arises because of **the differences** in the opinion. Here unless and until people are convinced by **experienced** people, by sighting examples etc., the things do not become certain. (Difference of Opinion)
- 3) **Sometimes neither** the objective nor actions are easily agreed upon. So the conflicting situation **between** individuals or between groups take along time to get resolved or the **problems** get further complicated. (Lack of co-operation)

3.8 CONFLICT RESOLUTION — STRATEGIES

From our previous discussion you have understood that the conflict may be resolved. If it is not resolved **then** patient care **suffers**, because standard of care depend on nurses mental condition. Now in this section we have described some strategies of conflict resolution.

Conflicts are resolved in an organization through **different** means. Grievances are processed and solutions are identified or disciplinary action is initiated. Conflicts which are suppressed should be brought to the surface and the matter should be discussed for resolution. First and **foremost** step in the resolution is the identification and exposing the conflict or situation to find out the opportunity for resolution.

Some of the **ways/Strategies** of Conflict Resolution;

- Win-loss policy – one party wins in negotiations and other party loses. It is otherwise known as 'dominance' either by an individual or a group.
- Drop out withdrawal from agreement – keeping silent to drop the issue temporarily or permanently (Avoidance).
- Smoothing – Accepting the **differences** and adjusting as one party.
- Compromising – Bargaining for acceptable solutions and compromising in spite of existing differences.
- Arbitration – Submitting the matter for decision to an outsider, (third party).
- Mediation – Inviting a **mediator**, a third party to find out a suitable **solution** for both the parties for the purpose of reconciliation.
- Win-win or Problem solving or confrontation – open exchange of **information** and working through differences. Both parties feel as if both have won.

Conflict is resolved with open and trusting exchange of views and ideas so that both the parties feel satisfied. Compromise is **usually** the result of collective bargaining. Collective bargaining, its characteristics, advantages are explained in detail for the managers to understand its meaning and the role played by bargaining leading to contracts or agreements. You are also informed about the grievance settlement procedure to learn the ways of conducting grievance procedure in your **future** practices.

In this unit you might have got some ideas about conflict management at least the strategies to resolve a conflict or a grievance.

Check your Progress 4

List down the methods of dealing with a conflict situation by the management.

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)
- 4)

3.9 LET US SUM UP

After studying in detail about 'conflicts', you can very well understand that they are not pleasant experiences and if they are not resolved in time the situation is harmful to individuals as well as to organizations. Managers and employees should be well acquainted with the skills of problem solving to see and restore the smooth functioning of the organization. Conflict free organization is not possible where there are people involved those people should **see** that the conflicts should not be allowed to prolong or become bad to worse. The conflicts should only be allowed to work or help as positive inspiration to workers and management to achieve goals and to increase production and quality.

The managers, whether it is an industry or a hospital cannot avoid union formation. These **unions** and the management should learn and work together with cooperation and collaboration and ~~the~~ conflicts and grievances whatever arise, should be resolved and settled appropriately to reach a contract or agreement which is of mutual interest. The **negotiations** should **always try** to maintain the interests and integrity of people instead of applying '**Divisive**' rule.

Nurses and nursing **management** should try to **learn** and work with mutual trust and faith and **nursing management** should put efforts to identify the conflicting situations and **grievances among** its nurses by **frequent** surveys and adequate supervisory methods. **Problems** should be identified and resolved as early as possible to maintain a healthy and peaceful working atmosphere by adopting different approaches of 'problem solving'.

3.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) It is a **disagreement** between two persons or two groups and described as a discord **due to differences** in ideas, values, beliefs, interests of two or more people. Conflict is also **defined** as a clashing idea and differences within an individual.
- 2) It is a **process** or procedure of discussion and negotiation between two parties to **resolve** the disputes or differences with or without the intervention of third party to **come** to an agreement.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) **Scarcity** of resources
- 2) **Competition for resources**
- 3) **Inadequate** job descriptions/specifications
- 4) **Conflict** arising from comparisons or differences in work characteristics
- 5) **Deferring personal** values and aims

Check Your Progress 3

- 1) a) **Intra-personal**
b) **Organisational**
- 2) **Refer Section 3.6.**
- 3) **Refer Section 3.6.**

Check Your Progress 4

- 1) Avoiding **unnecessary** conflict
- 2) **Selection of a leader**
- 3) Formation of committees and **groups**
- 4) Separation of the conflicting parties