

OCCUPATIONAL STRESS AND CONFLICT MANAGEMENT IN ORGANIZATIONS: UNDERSTANDING THE ORGANIZATIONAL BEHAVIOUR

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Abstract

The field of Organizational Behaviour is reputed for its vastness. As a result, this paper discusses the critical aspects of conflict and stress in modern day organizations including their resolution approaches and mechanisms. In addition, the paper outlines various ways in which stress and conflict management enhances the understanding of the field of Organizational Behaviour. The study argues that organizational conflict and occupational stress are two sides of the same coin whereas a holistic study of organizational conflict and occupational stress (causes, manifestations and management strategies) deepens our understanding of organization behaviour. It is envisioned that scholars and practitioners in the fields of psychology, conflict studies, Organizational Behaviour and Human Resource Management among others will find this paper useful to their endeavors.

Keywords: Conflict, Stress, Management, Organizational Behaviour

INTRODUCTION

While no single definition of conflict exists, most definitions involve the following factors: there are at least two independent groups, the groups perceive some incompatibility between themselves, and the groups interact with each other in some way (Putnam and Poole, 1987). Two example definitions are, "process in which one party perceives that its interests are being opposed or negatively affected by another party" (Wall & Callister, 1995, p. 517), and "the interactive process manifested in incompatibility, disagreement, or dissonance within or between social entities" (Rahim, 1992, p. 16).

Conflict may refer to many things including the conflict process, cultural conflict, ethnic conflict, organizational conflict, role conflict, social conflict, workplace conflict and armed conflict among others. This paper is limited to organizational conflict in an attempt to map out the contribution of conflict to the general understanding of the discipline of Organization Behaviour. It is also worth noting that the other types of conflict may also constitute the types and/or causes of conflicts in organizations. In doing so, we discuss the causes and effects of organizational conflict, levels of organizational conflicts and strategies of handling or resolving organizational conflicts.

Similarly, stress can refer to lots of things. For instance, in the sciences, stress may mean different things such as stress (biology), stress (linguistics), stress (mechanics), stress (psychological), a biotic stress etc. in this discussion however, I will focus on occupational stress (workplace stress). I will discuss its causes, manifestations and management strategies.

In concluding this paper, we will attempt to explain how organizational conflict and occupational stress contribute to the study and understanding of organizational behaviour.

ORGANIZATIONAL CONFLICT

Conflict may be defined as the absence of peace. Peace and conflict studies is a social science field that identifies and analyses violent and nonviolent behaviours as well as the structural mechanisms attending conflicts (including social conflicts) with a view towards understanding those processes which lead to a more desirable human condition. Disciplines involved in peace and conflict studies may include political science, geography, economics, psychology, sociology, international relations, history, anthropology, religious studies, and gender studies, as well as a variety of others. These disciplines also have immense contribution to organizational behaviour.

Since conflict is the absence of peace, organizational conflict may also be described as the absence of peace in the organization. Organizational conflict is a state of discord caused by the actual or perceived opposition of needs, values and interests between people working

together. Conflict takes many forms in organizations. There is the inevitable clash between formal authority and power and those individuals and groups affected. There are disputes over how revenues should be divided, how the work should be done and how long and hard people should work. There are jurisdictional disagreements among individuals, departments, and between unions and management. There are subtler forms of conflict involving rivalries, jealousies, personality clashes, role definitions, and struggles for power and favor. There is also conflict within individuals - between competing needs and demands - to which individuals respond in different ways (Johnson, 1976). These elements constitute my discussion as outlined in the following sections.

Types of Organizational Conflict

Organizational conflicts come in different types. The major types are discussed below:

Personal Conflict

Personal Conflict is a conflict between two people, most often from a mutual dislike or personality clash. According to Boston University FSAO, "Causes for workplace conflict can be personality or style differences and personal problems such as substance abuse, childcare issues, and family problems. Organizational factors such as leadership, management, budget, and disagreement about core values can also contribute." Personal conflict also has another dimension i.e. relationship conflict. Relationship conflicts reflect disagreements and incompatibilities among group members about personal issues that are not task related, such as social event's gossip, and world news (Barling & Cooper, 2008). There are some other workplace conflicts caused by personal attributes that managers should understand some of which they can possibly help to remedy. These include social conflict which refers to interpersonal, intragroup, and intergroup differences. Organizational conflict at the interpersonal level includes disputes between peers as well as supervisor-subordinate conflict (Johnson, 1976).

Role Conflict

Another facet of personal conflict has to do with the multiple roles people play in organizations. Behavioral scientists sometimes describe an organization as a system of position roles. Each member of the organization belongs to a role set, which is an association of individuals who share interdependent tasks and thus perform formally defined roles, which are further influenced both by the expectations of others in the role set and by one's own personality and expectations. For example, in a common form of classroom organization, students are expected

to learn from the instructor by listening to them, following their directions for study, taking exams, and maintaining appropriate standards of conduct. The instructor is expected to bring students high-quality learning materials, give lectures, write and conduct tests, and set a scholarly example. Another in this role set would be the dean of the school, who sets standards, hires and supervises faculty, maintains a service staff, readers and graders, and so on. The system of roles to which an individual belongs extends outside the organization as well, and influences their functioning within it. As an example, a person's roles as partner, parent, descendant, and church member are all intertwined with each other and with their set of organizational roles (Daniel & Robert, 1966)

As a consequence, there exist opportunities for role conflict as the various roles interact with one another. Other types of role conflict occur when an individual receives inconsistent demands from another person; for example, they are asked to serve on several time-consuming committees at the same time that they are urged to get out more production in their work unit. Another kind of role strain takes place when the individual finds that they are expected to meet the opposing demands of two or more separate members of the organization. Such a case would be that of a worker who finds himself pressured by their boss to improve the quality of their work while their work group wants more production in order to receive a higher bonus share. These and other varieties of role conflict tend to increase an individual's anxiety and frustration. Sometimes they motivate him to do more and better work. Other times they can lead to frustration and reduced efficiency (Knowles & Saxberg, 1971)

Interpersonal Conflict

This is conflicts between people in work groups, committees, task forces, and other organizational forms of face-to-face groups. Conflict arises in groups because of the scarcity of freedom, position, and resources. People who value independence tend to resist the need for interdependence and, to some extent, conformity within a group. People who seek power therefore struggle with others for position or status within the group. Rewards and recognition are often perceived as insufficient and improperly distributed, and members are inclined to compete with each other for these prizes.

In western culture, winning is more acceptable than losing, and competition is more prevalent than cooperation, all of which tends to intensify intragroup conflict. Group meetings are often conducted in a win-lose climate - that is, individual or subgroup interaction is conducted for the purpose of determining a winner and a loser rather than for achieving mutual problem solving.

Conflict in the group need not lead to negative results. However the presence of a dissenting member or subgroup often results in more penetration of the group's problem and more creative solutions. This is because disagreement forces the members to think harder in an attempt to cope with what may be valid objections to general group opinion. But the group must know how to deal with differences that may arise. True interdependence among members leads automatically to conflict resolution in the group. Interdependence recognizes that differences will exist and that they can be helpful. Hence, members learn to accept ideas from dissenters (which do not imply agreeing with them), they learn to listen and to value openness, and they learn to share a mutual problem-solving attitude to ensure the exploration of all facets of a problem facing the group.

Intergroup conflict is a sometimes necessary, sometimes destructive, event that occurs at all levels and across all functions in organizations. Intergroup conflict may help generate creative tensions leading to more effective contributions to the organization's goals, such as competition between sales districts for the highest sales (Daniel & Robert, 1966). Intergroup conflict is destructive when it alienates groups that should be working together, when it results in win-lose competition, and when it leads to compromises that represent less-than-optimum outcomes.

Intergroup conflict occurs in two general forms. Horizontal strain involves competition between functions, for example, sales versus production, research and development versus engineering, purchasing versus legal, line versus staff, and so on. Vertical strain involves competition between hierarchical levels, for example, union versus management, foremen versus middle management, shop workers versus foremen (Daniel & Robert, 1966). A struggle between a group of employees and management is an example of vertical strain of conflict. A clash between a sales department and production over inventory policy would be an example of horizontal strain.

Certain activities and attitudes are typical in groups involved in a win-lose conflict. Each side closes ranks and prepares itself for battle. Members show increased loyalty and support for their own groups. Minor differences between group members tend to be smoothed over, and deviants are dealt with harshly. The level of morale in the groups increases and infuses everyone with competitive spirit. The power structure becomes better defined, as the "real" leaders come to the surface and members rally around the "best" thinkers and talkers (Mills, 1967).

In addition, each group tends to distort both its own views and those of the competing group. What is perceived as "good" in one's own position is emphasized, what is "bad" is ignored; the position of the other group is assessed as uniformly "bad," with little "good" to be

acknowledged or accepted. Thus, the judgment and objectivity of both groups are impaired. When such groups meet to "discuss" their differences, constructive, rational behavior is severely inhibited (Jones & Pfeiffer, 1973). Each side phrases its questions and answers in a way that strengthens its own position and disparages the other's. Hostility between the two groups increases; mutual understandings are buried in negative stereotypes.

It is easy to see that under the conditions described above, mutual solutions to problems cannot be achieved. As a result, the side having the greater power wins; the other side loses. Or the conflict may go unresolved, and undesirable conditions or circumstances continue. Or the conflict may be settled by a higher authority (Jones & Pfeiffer, 1973).

None of these outcomes is a happy one. Disputes settled on the basis of power, such as through a strike or a lockout in a labor-management dispute, are often deeply resented by the loser. Such settlements may be resisted and the winner defeated in underground ways that are difficult to detect and to counter. When this happens, neither side wins; both are losers. If the conflict is left unresolved, as when both sides withdraw from the scene, intergroup cooperation and effectiveness may be seriously impaired to the detriment of the entire organization. Disputes that are settled by higher authority also may cause resentment and what is called "lose-lose" consequences. Such settlements are invariably made on the basis of incomplete information - without data that the conflict itself obscures - and therefore are poor substitutes for mutually reasoned solutions. Again, both sides have lost.

Conflict is not always destructive, it may be a motivator. When it is destructive, however, managers need to understand and do something about it. A rational process for dealing with the conflict should be programmed. Such a process should include a planned action response on the part of the manager or the organization, rather than relying on a simple reaction or a change that occurs without specific action by management (Johnson, 1976).

Causes of Organizational Conflict

Conflicts within an organizational set up can be attributed to many factors. According to Maslow, Argyris, McGregor, Rogers, and other writers of the so-called growth schools, there is a basic tendency in the development of the human personality toward self-fulfillment, or self-actualization. This implies that as an individual matures, they want to be given more responsibility, broader horizons, and the opportunity to develop their personal potential. This process is interrupted whenever a person's environment fails to encourage and nurture these desires.

Formal organizations are rational structures that are based on their assumption of emotions, feelings, and irrationality as human weaknesses and often try to replace individual

control with institutional control. Thus the principle of task specialization is seen as a device that simplifies tasks for the sake of efficiency. As a consequence, however, it uses only a fraction of a person's capacity and ability. The principle of chain of command centralizes authority but makes the individual more dependent on their superiors. The principle of normal span of control, which assigns a maximum of six or seven subordinates to report to the chief executive, reduces the number of individuals reporting to the head of the organization or to the manager of any subunit. Although this simplifies the job of control for the manager, it also creates more intensive surveillance of the subordinate, and therefore permits him less freedom to control himself (Johnson, 1976).

Under such conditions, subordinates are bound to find themselves in conflict with the formal organization, and sometimes with each other. They advance up the narrowing hierarchy where jobs get fewer, and "fewer" implies competing with others for the decreasing number of openings. Task specialization tends to focus the subordinate's attention on their own narrow function and divert him from thinking about the organization as a whole. This effect increases the need for coordination and leads to a circular process of increasing the dependence on the leader.

They may respond to organizational pressures and threats by defensive reactions such as aggression against their supervisors and co-workers, fixated behavior or apathy, compromise and gamesmanship, or psychological withdrawal and daydreaming. All of these defense mechanisms reduce a person's potential for creative, constructive activity on the job. Finally, employees may organize unions or unsanctioned informal groups whose norms of behavior are opposed to many of the organization's goals. As a sort of self-fulfilling prophecy, all of these reactions to the constraints of the formal organization merely serve to reinforce and strengthen them.

The conflict between the formal organization and the individual will continue to exist wherever managers remain ignorant of its causes or wherever the organizational structure and the leadership style are allowed to become inconsistent with the legitimate needs of the organization members. Everyone recognizes the necessity for order and control in organizations. However, order and control can be achieved only at the expense of individual freedom (Johnson, 1976) and this is a major cause of conflict as people tend to find it hard to cede their personal freedoms to organizational control. Subordinates adapt to these conditions in the organization in several ways. In the extreme, they may find the situation intolerable and leave the organization. Or they may strive to advance to positions of higher authority, there to adopt the controlling style they are trying to escape.

Thus, conflict affecting organizations can occur in individuals, between individuals, and between groups. Conflicts within work groups are often caused by struggles over control, status, and scarce resources. Conflicts between groups in organizations have similar origins. The constructive resolution of such conflicts can most often be achieved through a rational process of problem solving, coupled with a willingness to explore issues and alternatives and to listen to each other ((Johnson, 1976). In general, causes of conflicts in organizations are numerous. They range from interpersonal causes such as contrasting tastes, lifestyles, attitudes, behaviour, and competition for scarce organizational resources among others to structural causes such as leadership styles, management processes, disputes over resources, power struggles, salary disputes and disagreements over working conditions among others.

Effects of Organizational Conflict

Effects of organizational conflict take various forms including but not limited to:

- Wastage of time
- Delayed decisions
- Creation of deadlocks
- Regression e.g. withdrawal of expertise, experience, opinion etc
- Go slows
- Strikes
- Lockouts
- Defensiveness
- Sabotage

Strategies for Handling Organizational Conflicts

Organizational conflicts can be handled through any of the following ways. According to Montana (2008) conflict can be handled through the following strategies:

- Avoidance- a management strategy which includes non attention or creating a total separation of the combatants or a partial separation that allows limited interaction.
- Smoothing - technique which stresses the achievement of harmony between disputants.
- Dominance or power intervention - the imposition of a solution by higher management, other than the level at which the conflict exists.
- Compromise - strategy that seeks a resolution which satisfies at least part of the each party's position.

- Confrontation - strategy featuring a thorough and frank discussion of the sources and types of conflict and achieving a resolution that is in the best interest of the group, but that may be at the expense of one or all of the conflicting parties.

Conflict Management

Counseling

When personal conflict leads to frustration and loss of efficiency, counseling may prove to be a helpful antidote. Although few organizations can afford the luxury of having professional counselors on the staff, given some training, managers may be able to perform this function. Nondirective counseling, or "listening with understanding", is little more than being a good listener - something every manager should manage to exercise as a way of attempting to resolve conflicts in their organizations (Knowles & Saxberg, 1971)

Sometimes the simple process of being able to vent one's feelings - that is, to express them to a concerned and understanding listener, is enough to relieve frustration and make it possible for the frustrated individual to advance to a problem-solving frame of mind, better able to cope with a personal difficulty that is affecting their work adversely. The nondirective approach is one effective way for managers to deal with frustrated subordinates and co-workers.

There is other more direct and more diagnostic ways that might be used in appropriate circumstances. The great strength of the nondirective approach (nondirective counseling is based on the client-centered therapy of Carl Rogers), however, lies in its simplicity, its effectiveness, and the fact that it deliberately avoids the manager-counselor's diagnosing and interpreting emotional problems, which would call for special psychological training. No one has ever been harmed by being listened to sympathetically and understandingly. On the contrary, this approach has helped many people to cope with problems that were interfering with their effectiveness on the job.

STRESS AND STRESS MANAGEMENT

Stress comes in many ways and can also mean many things. This discussion is therefore limited to Occupational Stress. Occupational stress is stress involving work. According to the current World Health Organization's (WHO) definition, occupational or work-related stress "is the response people may have when presented with work demands and pressures that are not matched to their knowledge and abilities and which challenge their ability to cope." (Susic, 2013) There are several factors associated with occupational stress. The Journal of the Canadian Medical Association outlines the following factors:

- Factors unique to the job
- Role in the organization
- Career development
- Interpersonal work relationships
- Organizational structure/climate.

These individual factors demonstrate that stress can occur specifically when a conflict arises from the job demands of the employee and the employee itself. If not handled properly, the stress can become distress (Robertson, 2012)

- The ability of the employee coping with the specific hours worked the level of productive rate expected, the physical environment, as well as the expectancy of the work desired by management. For instance, research shows that night shifts in particular have a high possibility of negative impact towards the health of the employee. In relation to this, approximately 20 percent of night shift workers have experienced psycho-physiological dysfunctions, including heart diseases. Extreme factors can affect the competence levels of employees.
- Role in the organization is associated with the hierarchical ranking of that particular employee within the organization. Upper management is entitled to oversee the overall functioning of the organization. This causes potential distress as the employee must be able to perform simultaneous tasks.
- With career development, other factors come into play. Security of their occupation, promotion levels, etc. are all sources of stress, as the business market in terms of technology of economic dominance is ever-changing.
- Interpersonal relationships within the workplace. The workplace is a communication and interaction based industry. These relationships (either developed or developing) can be problematic or positive. Common stressors include harassment, discrimination, biased opinions, hearsay, and other derogatory remarks.
- Organizational climate or structure. The overall communication, management style, and participation among groups of employees are variables to be considered. In essence, the resultant influence of the high participation rate, collaborative planning, and equally dispersed responsibilities provide a positive effect on stress reduction, improved work performance, job satisfaction, and decreased psychosomatic disorders.

Causes of Occupational Stress

Job stress results from various interactions of the worker and the environment of the work they perform their duties. Location, gender, environment, and many other factors contribute to the

buildup of stress. Job stress results from the interaction of the worker and the conditions of work. Views differ on the importance of worker characteristics versus working conditions as the primary cause of job stress. The differing viewpoints suggest different ways to prevent stress at work. Differences in individual characteristics such as personality and coping skills can be very important in predicting whether certain job conditions will result in stress. In other words, what is stressful for one person may not be a problem for someone else. This viewpoint underlies prevention strategies that focus on workers and ways to help them cope with demanding job conditions (Sadgeman, 2005).

Working conditions

Although the importance of individual differences cannot be ignored, scientific evidence suggests that certain working conditions are stressful to most people. Sadgeman (2005) suggests that such evidence argues for a greater emphasis on working conditions as the key source of job stress, and for job redesign as a primary prevention strategy. Large surveys of working conditions, including conditions recognized as risk factors for job stress, were conducted in member states of the European Union in 1990, 1995, and 2000. Results showed a time trend suggesting an increase in work intensity. In 1990, the percentage of workers reporting that they worked at high speeds at least one-quarter of their working time was 48%, increasing to 54% in 1995 and to 56% in 2000. Similarly, 50% of workers reported they worked against tight deadlines at least one-fourth of their working time in 1990, increasing to 56% in 1995 and 60% in 2000. However, no change was noted in the period 1995–2000 (data not collected in 1990) in the percentage of workers reporting sufficient time to complete tasks (European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, 2005)

Workload

In an occupational setting, dealing with workload can be stressful and serve as a stressor for employees. There are three aspects of workload that can be stressful (Katz & Kahn, 1978)

- Quantitative workload or overload: Having more work to do than can be accomplished comfortably.
- Qualitative workload: Having work that is too difficult.
- Underload: Having work that fails to use a worker's skills and abilities.

Workload has been linked to a number of strains, including anxiety, physiological reactions such as cortisol, fatigue (Ganster & Rosen 2013) backache, headache, and gastrointestinal problems (Nixon et. al, 2011). Workload as a work demand is a major component of the demand-control model of stress (Karasek, 1979). This model suggests that jobs with high demands can be

stressful, especially when the individual has low control over the job. In other words control serves as a buffer or protective factor when demands or workload is high. This model was expanded into the demand-control-support model that suggests that the combination of high control and high social support at work buffers the effects of high demands (Johnson & Hall, 1988)

As a work demand, workload is also relevant to the job demands-resources model of stress that suggests that jobs are stressful when demands (e.g., workload) exceed the individual's resources to deal with them (Demerouti, Nachreiner & Schaufeli, 2001).

Long hours

A substantial percentage of Americans work very long hours by one estimate, more than 26% of men and more than 11% of women worked 50 hours per week or more in 2000. These figures represent a considerable increase over the previous three decades, especially for women. According to the Department of Labor, there have been a rise in increasing amount of hours in the work place by employed women, an increase in extended work weeks (>40 hours) by men, and a considerable increase in combined working hours among working couples, particularly couples with young children (United States Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2007; Gerson, 2004).

Status

A person's status in the workplace can also affect levels of stress. While workplace stress has the potential to affect employees of all categories, less powerful employees (that is, those who have less control over their jobs) are more likely to suffer stress than powerful workers. However, managers as well as other kinds of workers are vulnerable to work overload.

Economic factors

Economic factors that employees are facing in the 21st century have been linked to increased stress levels. Researchers and social commentators have pointed out that the computer and communications revolutions have made companies more efficient and productive than ever before. This boon in productivity however, has caused higher expectations and greater competition, putting more stress on the employee (Primm, 2005). The following economic factors may lead to workplace stress (Colligan, Colligan & Higgins, 2006)

- Pressure from investors, who can quickly withdraw their money from company stocks.
- The lack of trade and professional unions in the workplace.
- Inter-company rivalries caused by the efforts of companies to compete globally

- The willingness of companies to swiftly lay off workers to cope with changing business environments.

Bullying

Bullying in the workplace can also contribute to stress. This can be broken down into five different categories

- Threat to profession status
- Threat to personal status
- Isolation
- Excess work
- Destabilization i.e. lack of credit for work, meaningless tasks etc.

Rhodes et al. (2010) argue that this in effect can create a hostile work environment for the employees that, which in turn, can affect their work ethic and contribution to the organization

Narcissism and Psychopathy

Thomas (2010) suggests that there tends to be a higher level of stress with people who work or interact with a narcissist, which in turn increases absenteeism and staff turnover. Boddy (2011) finds the same dynamic where there is corporate psychopath in the organization.

Workplace conflict

Interpersonal conflict among people at work has been shown to be one of the most frequently noted stressors for employees (Keenan & Newton; Liu, Spector & Shi, 2007). Conflict has been noted to be an indicator of the broader concept of workplace harassment (Bowling & Beehr, 2006). It relates to other stressors that might co-occur, such as role conflict, role ambiguity, and workload. It also relates to strains such as anxiety, depression, physical symptoms, and low levels of job satisfaction (Bowling & Beehr, 2006)

Sexual harassment

Women are more likely than men to experience sexual harassment, especially for those working in traditionally masculine occupations. In addition, a study indicated that sexual harassment negatively affects workers' psychological well-being (Gyllensten, 2005). Another study found that level of harassment at workplaces lead to differences in performance of work related tasks. High levels of harassment were related to the worst outcomes, and no harassment was related

to least negative outcomes. In other words, women who had experienced a higher level of harassment were more likely to perform poorly at workplaces (Gyllensten, 2005).

Effects of Occupational Stress

Stressful working conditions can lead to three types of strains: Behavioral (e.g., absenteeism or poor performance), physical (e.g., headaches or coronary heart disease), and psychological (e.g., anxiety or depressed mood) (Jex, 1998). Physical symptoms that may occur because of occupational stress include fatigue, headache, upset stomach, muscular aches and pains, chronic mild illness, sleep disturbances, and eating disorders. Psychological and behavioral problems that may develop include anxiety, irritability, alcohol and drug use, feeling powerless and low morale (Brynien, 2006). The spectrum of effects caused by occupational stress includes absenteeism, poor decision making, lack of creativity, accidents, organizational breakdown or even sabotage (Teasdale, 2006). If exposure to stressors in the workplace is prolonged, then chronic health problems can occur including stroke. An examination on physical and psychological effects of workplace stress was conducted with a sample of 552 female blue collar employees of a microelectronics facility. It was found that job-related conflicts were associated with depressive symptoms, severe headaches, fatigue, rashes, and other multiple symptoms (Bromet et.al, 1992) Studies among the Japanese population specifically showed a more than 2-fold increase in the risk of total stroke among men with job strain (combination of high job demand and low job control) (Ishikawa et.al, 2009). Along with the risk of stroke comes high blood pressure and immune system dysfunction. Prolonged occupational stress can lead to occupational burnout.

The effects of job stress on chronic diseases are more difficult to ascertain because chronic diseases develop over relatively long periods of time and are influenced by many factors other than stress. Nonetheless, there is some evidence that stress plays a role in the development of several types of chronic health problems - including cardiovascular disease, musculoskeletal disorders, and psychological disorders (NIOSH (1999).

Techniques of Managing Stress

A combination of organizational change and stress management is often the most useful approach for preventing stress at work (NIOSH (1999). Both organizations and employees can employ strategies at organizational and individual levels. Generally, organizational level strategies include job procedure modification and employee assistance programs (EPA). Individual level strategies include taking a vacation. Getting a realistic job preview to understand the normal workload and schedules of the job will also help people to identify whether or not the

job fits them. According to Sauter, Murphy and Haurrel (1990) the following techniques can significantly manage workplace stress:

- Ensure that the workload is in line with workers' capabilities and resources.
- Design jobs to provide meaning, stimulation, and opportunities for workers to use their skills.
- Clearly define workers' roles and responsibilities.
- Train employees on stress awareness
- Give workers opportunities to participate in decisions and actions affecting their jobs.
- Improve communications. Reduce uncertainty about career development and future employment prospects.
- Provide opportunities for social interaction among workers.
- Establish work schedules that are compatible with demands and responsibilities outside the job.
- Combat workplace discrimination (based on race, gender, national origin, religion or language).
- Bring in an objective outsider such as a consultant to suggest a fresh approach to persistent problems.
- Introducing a participative leadership style to involve as many subordinates as possible to resolve stress-producing problems.
- Encourage work-life balance through family-friendly benefits and policies

CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that organizational conflict and occupational stress are two sides of the same coin. One side can be a cause and a manifestation of the other at the same time. In other words, conflict can cause stress while at the same time, stress can cause conflict. This is a very interesting topic indeed.

Since Organizational behavior (OB) is "the study of human behavior in organizational settings, the interface between human behavior and the organization, and the organization itself", (Moorhead & Griffin, 1995) a holistic study of organizational conflict and occupational stress (causes, manifestations and management strategies) deepens our understanding of organization behaviour. For instance, this discussion has borrowed heavily from authors of psychology and medicine. This serves to indicate that Organizational Behaviour as a discipline is informed by and developed by many other disciplines.

In addition, OB is a major topic in the field of Human Resource Management, understanding its constituent elements such as conflict and stress further grounds learners,

students, and those who wish to profess the field of HRM as educators, writers, consultants, managers, etc

The study of conflict and stress management contributes immensely to the development of OB as it delves into the human mind in a bid to understand the behaviour of humans in different scenarios within an organizational environment.

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