



## An Analysis of Organizational Stress In Institutions

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**ABSTRACTS:-** Many psychologists, especially industrial psychologists who are experts in either human resources management in public management or public personnel administration in public administration, maintain that motivation and development are close allies of manpower planning. Employees are human beings, and as such have human needs. Persons in employment spend a substantial amount of time in the workplace, and their needs are not confined to times outside working hours, but occur also during working time. As will be demonstrated in this article, there are scientists and writers who believe that when the needs of a worker are not met, s/he becomes psychologically ill or is stressed which is the subject of this article.

**Keywords:-** stress, psychologically ill, stressors and conflicts, workplace and human needs Persons in employment are human beings with human needs. They spend a substantial amount of time in the workplace, and their needs are not restricted to times outside working hours, but also during working time. When the needs are not met, workers become psychologically ill or stressed.

It is important to define clearly the term public management in order to provide a favourable context for this discussion on stress as a psychological illness.

### What is by public management?

Public management is systematically defined as: that part of public administration where a person; who within the general political, social economic, technological, and cultural environments; and the specific environment of suppliers, competitors, regulators and consumers;

- a. is charged with certain functions, such as policy-making, planning, organizing, leading, controlling and evaluation;
- b. makes use of certain skills, such as decision making, communications, change management, managing conflict and negotiations skills;
- c. is able to perform certain applications, such as policy analysis, strategic management and organizational development; and
- d. is able to utilize certain managerial aids, such as computers, technology, information management, and other techniques.

### Specific aspects that emerge from the above definition are as follows:

1. certain functions: policy making, planning, organizing, leading, controlling and evaluation [PPOLCE];
2. certain skills: decision making, communications, change management, managing conflict, and negotiation skills;
3. certain applications: policy, analysis, strategic management and organizational development; and certain managerial aids: computers, technology, information management, and games theory.

## I. PURPOSE OF THE ARTICLE

The purpose of this is to: (a) analyze the concept of organizational stress in general management and (b) explain the sources, stress moderators, and stress outcomes.

## II. ORGANIZATIONAL STRESS IN GENERAL MANAGEMENT

Many industrial psychologists, who are experts in human resources management, maintain that motivation and development are close allies of manpower planning. Employees are human beings, and as such have *human needs*. Persons in employment spend a substantial amount of time in the workplace, and their needs are not confined to times outside working hours; but occur also during working time. As will be seen, there are writers who believe that when the needs of a worker are not met, s/he becomes *psychologically ill*. We will briefly look at some of the theories on motivation, bearing in mind that a motivated person, is one who can develop into a better, more productive, responsible, employee.

### 3.1 Leading scientists on stress theories

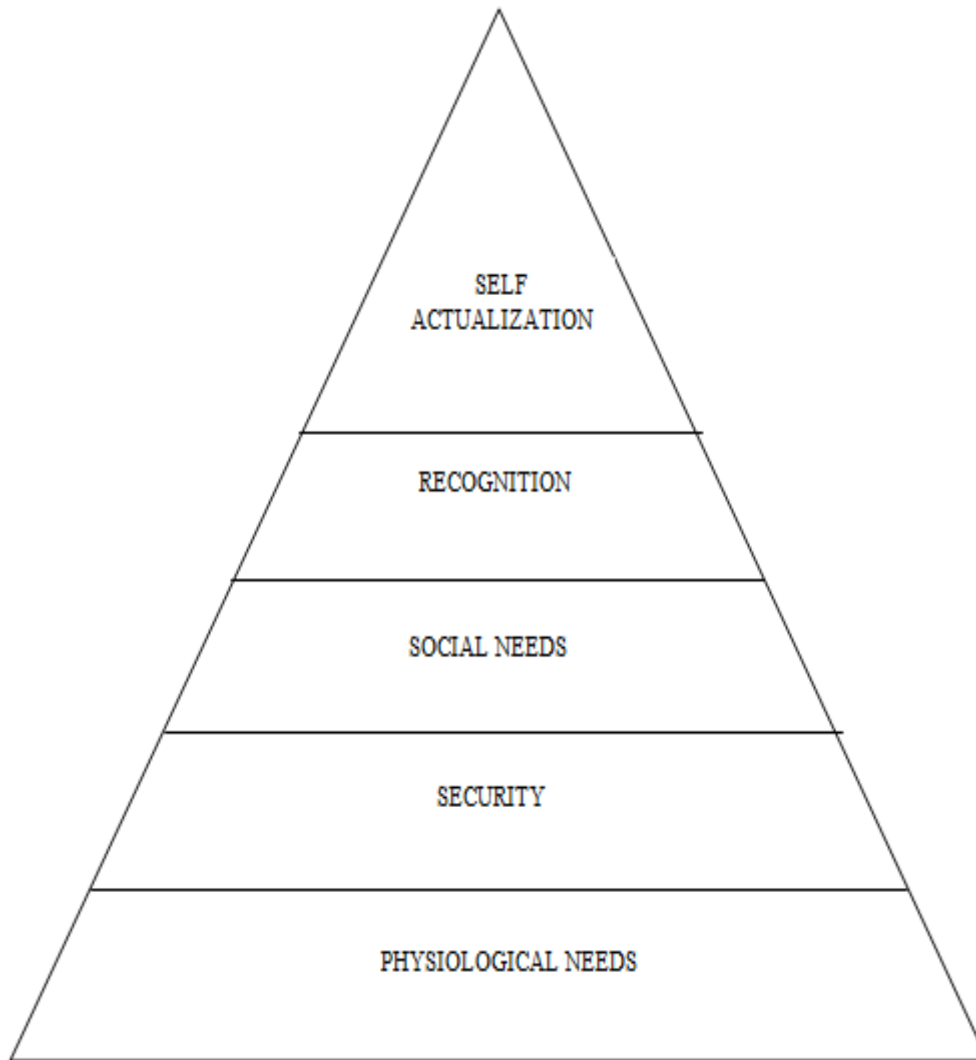
**Douglas McGregor's (1960), theory X** postulates that people have an inherent dislike of work; will avoid it if they can; and consequently they have to be coerced, controlled, directed or threatened with punishment in order to get them to put forth adequate objectives, and most people prefer it that way.

*McGregor* states that assumptions about human motivation are at the core of theories about management of human resources. As far as motivation is concerned, man is a wanting animal and as soon as one need is satisfied another need appears in its place. Man in effect has a hierarchy of needs, a fact which is unrecognized in theory X and is thus ignored in the conventional approach to the management of people. When physiological needs are reasonably satisfied, higher level needs begin to dominate man and to motivate him.

The social needs are often feared by management as being a possible threat to organizational objectives, resulting in behaviour tending to thwart those objectives. The greatest needs of man are the *egoistic needs*: needs relating to *self – respect; self- confidence, autonomy, achievement, competence, knowledge, and reputation*, that is, *for status, for recognition, for appreciation and for deserved respect* of one's fellows.

**McGregor's theory Y** is based on the view that the physical and mental effort in work is as natural as play or rest: that external control and the threat of punishment are not the only means of bringing about effort towards organizational objectives; that man will exercise self-direction and self-control in the service of objectives to which is committed; that commitment to objectives is a function of the rewards associated with their achievement; that the average human being learns under proper conditions not only to accept but to seek responsibility; that the capacity to exercise a relatively high degree of imagination, ingenuity and is widely, not narrowly, distributed in the population; and that under the conditions of modern industrial life, the intellectual potentialities of the average human being are only partially utilized. *McGregor* goes on to state that the assumptions of theory Y point to the fact that the limits on human collaboration in the organization setting are not limits of human, nature but of management's ingenuity in discovering human resources. Theory X provides an easy rationalization but theory Y places the problem squarely in the lap of management. The central principle of theory X is direction and control Y's is that of integration, of creation of such condition that the members of the organization can achieve their own goals best by directing their efforts to the success of the enterprise. The principle of integration demands that both the organizations and the individual's needs be recognized based on the assumption that unless integration is achieved the organization will suffer.

**Abraham H.A. Maslow's theory (Human Motivation Psychological Review volume 50 of 1943, and the Farther Reaches of Human Nature: Middlesex: Penguin, 1976, p 42 – 47)** postulates that people satisfy their needs in an ascending order, *starting with physiological needs*, leading consecutively into security, social needs, recognition needs and finally into *self-actualization*, as in the diagram below:



Maslow describes self-actualizing people as people who are, without exception, involved in a cause outside their own skin and the process of self-actualization commences with full concentration and total absorption and then goes on to a choice for growth, honesty and responsibility, using one's intelligence even if it means an arduous and demanding period of preparation, and finally self-examination in order to get rid of repression.

**Fredrick F. Herzberg (Work and the nature of Man: London: Crosby Lockwood Staples, 1968: p 72 – 5; 78 – 79; and 177) developed the motivation – hygiene theory**, in which the factors relative to job satisfaction, the *satisfiers* were called job dissatisfies. A hygienic environment may prevent discontent with a job, but positive happiness seems to require some attainment of *psychological growth*. The *satisfiers* and *dissatisfiers* were identified as follows:

<b>Satisfiers</b>	<b>Dissatisfiers</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• achievement</li><li>• recognition</li><li>• the work itself</li><li>• responsibility</li><li>• advancement</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• company (organizational) policy and administration</li><li>• supervision</li><li>• salary</li><li>• interpersonal relations</li><li>• working Conditions</li></ul>

These last three were of far greater importance for a lasting change of attitudes. The distinction identified by Herzberg is that what a man does in his job affects his positive satisfaction, and the context or environment in which he does his job contains the seeds of the illness are not the observe [results] of mental health factors; rather the mental illness factors belong to the category of hygiene factors.

In a South African or Zimbabwean, or Malawian municipal administrative context, what Herzberg has to say can be amply explained by way of the example which follows. Let us take a middle rank supervisor, put him in poor working conditions, pay him poorly and leave him, pm tenterhooks because of confused policies. That man will stay with his employer council as long as he enjoys his work, is allowed to achieve and is given not only responsibility but also recognition for his achievement. If, however, these last factors change and he loses the positive factors, he will either leave or resort to a defence mechanism such as apathy. The ways in which our hypothetical employee can lose his positive motivation could be found in the examples of bad leadership given above, but in essence if a man is stripped of his dignity and personality, as a worker at work, he cannot remain positively motivated. Also, if you deprive an employee of the positive factors but let him have the hygiene factors, he will still not be a complete well motivated worker because his growth and development are being impeded.

Finally, Herzberg attempts to relate motivation factors to levels of psychological growth, as follows:

Motivation	Growth principle
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• achievement and recognition for achievement</li><li>• responsibility</li><li>• possibility of growth</li><li>• advancement</li><li>• interest</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• opportunity to increase knowledge</li><li>• opportunity for creativity</li><li>• opportunity to experience ambiguity in decision-making</li><li>• opportunity to individuate and seek real growth</li></ul>

But, on the negative side of theories as will be seen, there are also prominent scholars and writers who believe that when these needs of worker are not met; the worker becomes psychologically ill. He becomes a stressed person, which is in fact the very subject of this article. That is, as will be seen, there are arbiters and scholars who believe that when the needs of a worker are not met, he becomes *psychologically ill*. S/he becomes a stressed person.

We, therefore, intend to: (a) *define what stress means*; (b) *investigate the sources of stress and its consequences in organized institutions, that is to say in industrial settings*; (c) *analyze and compare a variety of methods for diagnosing the causes of stress in an institution*; and (d) *develop methods for managing work and personal worker- demands*.

From the above broad description it may appear useful to examine systematically each of these aspects in some details. But it needs to be remarked briefly that there are a number of barriers to improved job performance in the modern complex and dynamic public and private institutions. Such barriers may be singled out as *job stress, organizational stress and conflicts* to mention just a few. For a quick start our attention is focused on what stress means, and then on the sources of stress.

### III. THE CONCEPT OF STRESS

The term “stress” (The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary, 1959:2040) is used to mean different things to different people. But with regards to this article, the term stress is used to refer to:

- hardship, straits, adversity, affliction;
- some overpowering pressure of some adverse force or influence;
- a condition of things compelling or characterized by strained effort;
- to subject to hardship; to afflict, harass, or oppress.

In both the medical and management literature, the concept ‘stress’ is viewed as an internal experience that creates a physiological or psychological imbalance within the individual. In some psychotherapeutic terms, stress is a mental disorder [C.T Onions, pp. 1612 – 1613].

It is now known that many institutions today place a high value on the members of their management teams. An institution's set of human resources, particularly managers; provide the direction, leadership, motivation, and control that lead to work production and productivity, profitability, growth, and survival of the enterprise.

Until recently, formal public and private institutions have emphasized the development and retention of management through selection, training, varied job tasks, and an effective reward system. This level of emphasis and resources given to management development, however, can go up in smoke when promising, effective managers are stricken with heart attacks or other physiological disorders. It is because of this situation that many institutions now place an increased interest on understanding and reducing a *primary factor in such physiological and is health problem, namely, job stress. Therefore, stress is seen as a psychological experience which creates a physiological or psychological disorder within the individual*, and this has been addressed in both the modern medical and management literature. It is only recently that the two literatures have been combined to form a more comprehensive framework of the relationship between *organizational stress and physiological disorders*. In general, a review of the two literatures shows that: (a) great variety of organizational and environmental conditions are capable of producing stress; (b) different individuals respond to the same conditions in different ways; (c) the intensity and extent of stress within the individual are difficult to predict; and (d) the consequences of prolonged stress may include behavioural issues, such as increased absenteeism, or a chronic disease, such as coronary heart disease.

#### IV. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF ANALYSIS OF STRESS

A conceptual framework of analysis was competently developed by the two famous American industrial research psychologists, *J.M. Ivancevich and M.T. Matteson*, their job stress analytical framework includes *five essential elements*, namely, (a) stressors meaning sources of stress; (b) stress moderators; (c) actual stress; (d) the outcomes of stress; and (e) possible stress reducers.

A critical analysis is presented on each of the identifiable factors, as shown below

##### **5.1 Sources of Stress**

Sources of stress are also called stressors.

Stressors are, therefore, essentially the sources of stress, or factors which facilitate the development of job stress. Three main sources of stress or stressor categories have been identified as: (a) environmental factors; (b) organizational factors; and (c) individual factors.

##### **5.1.1 Environmental factors**

These relate to the general environmental situation and its impact on the organizations and individuals. These factors include:

- a. the state of the economy of the country, for instance, inflation, recession, unemployment rate, increasing competition;
- b. uncertainties in the political arena, for instance how new urban and district councilors, senators and the parliamentarians in the House of Assembly in the cases of Nigeria, Kenya, South Africa and Zimbabwe will vote on certain important issues; and
- c. the general quality of life, for example, the increasing inferior quality of education, decline in the importance of the family as a reputable institution, and rising crime rate in the cities of Southern African cities, for instance, Harare, Johannesburg, Cape Town, Pretoria, Bulawayo and so on. All these environmental factors can create an unbearable state of stress to an individual.

##### **5.1.2 Organizational factors**

At the organizational level, stress can be induced by an ineffective organizational design, for instance, too much emphasis on rules, regulations and laws, procedures and control systems, or from less than satisfactory promotion and reward system.

Group-level stressors may include problems related to low cohesion, conflicts, or a coercive supervisor.

At the individual level, the emphasis is on dysfunctions which are associated with roles, for example, role conflicts, jobs that are either too routine and boring, or too complex to handle, or a lack of career progression path.

##### **5.1.3 Individual factors**

These concern such stressors or causes of stress as:

Family, for instance, illness, death of father, divorce; separation of wife and husband;

Economic difficulties, for example, rising household and mortgage costs, bus fares; and

Issues of mobility, for example, disruption of family life with a transfer of father to another province, or out of the country leaving the family behind.

All these are factors which have a tendency to contribute to the development of stress to individuals. With this brief analysis of the sources of stress a stressors, attention is now given to what we shall call stress moderators.

### **5.2 Stress moderators**

Stress moderators are identified as personality and international factors. Some of the factors, singly or in some combinations, are moderators that either *accentuate or diminish* the impact or stressors.

Some psychological research studies suggest that personality differences are important stress moderators, involving such concepts as self- esteem, self – confidence, aggressiveness, cheerfulness and self- discipline.

According to recent psychological studies, individuals who exhibit aggressive, hardworking personality characteristics are more susceptible to heart diseases than those who are relaxed and gentle.

Other demographic variables have been shown to relate to stress and physiological disorders. Included are such factors as heredity, age, exercise, diet, alcohol and tobacco use

Research studies also indicate that *culture* can be seen as a moderator of stress. For example, in a certain comparative systematic study of the United States of American and Canadian managers, some very interesting similarities and differences were found. The studies showed that:

- a. managers in both countries felt that lack of clarity in one’s job was an important stress inducer.
- b. Canadian managers reported that a great deal of their stress was caused by the use of inappropriate organizational design;
- c. The United States of American managers felt that high stress was more the result of the great pressures put in them for quick effective decision-making.

### **5.3 Two main categories of stress: perceived and actual**

*Stress, both perceived and actual*, involves two main categories, namely, (a) *job stress* which is closely connected with organizational causes, and (b) *life stress* which concerns individual and family causes.

For each particular stress category, *two* components of stress are noted, namely, *frustration and anxiety*:

- a. *Frustration* applies to any obstruction or barriers between behaviour and its goal. It can occur from a change, delay, or lack of reinforcement for certain behaviours; simple obstructions, for example, laws, rules and procedures that prevent the adoption of a new plan.
- b. *Anxiety* is the psychological feeling of not having the appropriate response at the time expected or anticipated.

### **5.4 Stress outcomes**

Stress outcomes are in effect the results or consequences, or the resultant behaviours. The results of stress can be either costly in monetary terms or devastating in human terms. They can lead to loss of human life. For example, recent figures from the United States of America national Clearing House or Mental Health Information show that stress resulted in a US\$12 billion decrease in the productive capacity of the United State of America industrial workers. This includes excessive absenteeism [US\$55 billion], excessive unemployment [US\$2.7 billion], and inefficiency on the job [US\$1.9 billion].

Starting as these figures are, they represent only stress that has resulted in *psychosomatic and physiological disorders* may even have a bigger impact on organizational behaviour and job performance.

The outcomes of stress are shown as relating to both physiological and behavioural factors. Research studies show the potential link between stress and such dysfunctional physiological outcomes as heart disease. Similarly, stress and such behavioural outcomes as work dissatisfaction, decreased job performance, and increased absenteeism have been recorded. Some research studies suggest that behavioural and physiological outcomes are related, in particular, job and life satisfaction may be related to the disease.

### **5.5 Stress reducers**

Because excessive stress can be related to both organizations and individuals, it is important for managers to understand the causes and reactions to stress and to understand the causes and reactions to stress and to understand potential stress reduction methods. Stress reducers include individual and organizational actions.

#### **Individual Actions**

First and foremost, a physical examination conducted by a doctor is almost a prerequisite to all stress – reduction programme. Knowledge about one’s physical condition, smoking and drinking habits, coronary history, and heredity all assist in better understanding the causes of stress and their potential effects. Other individual actions include increasing exercise, changing habits, and learning to control the tempo of the day’s work through relaxation exercises or philosophical meditations.

### **Organizational Actions**

The possibility for stress reduction also falls on the organization. Because many stressors are related to ambiguous or conflicting job activities, the organization may take such steps as improving communications; redesigning jobs in order to decrease boredom or remove unnecessary demands; revising career paths to be made more realistic; increasing worker participation in decision making; training in stress reduction procedures, or job performance planning.

Although negative effects of stress have been emphasized, it is important not to overlook the one very important aspect, that is, stress is and will continue to be a daily fact of working in modern institutions. Some managers, in fact, thrive and are most effective under stressful conditions. The main point, however, is that managers need to recognize that reduction of the dysfunctional consequences of stress is strongly determined by the degree of understanding of stressors and the ability to diagnose their existence, causes and effects, and the ability to take appropriate action.

## **V. CONFLICTS AS CAUSES OF STRESS IN ORGANIZATIONS**

Conflicts can cause a lot of stress to *individuals, groups and organizations* in modern industrial societies.

### **6.1 Types of conflicts**

Because an organization is both complex and dynamic, the various sub-units and groups that make up its character can develop different and sometimes highly specialized ways and means of doing their work. When these individuals, sub-units and groups interact, these differences can lead to conflict. The term *conflict* can be defined as *the disagreement between two or more organizational members concerning the way to be used to achieve certain objectives*.

The ways in which organizations see and treat conflicts have changed greatly during the last eighteen years. Two major views of conflict are most prominent: traditional and contemporary. The *traditional view* sees conflict as something to be avoided, caused by personality conflicts or by a failure of leadership, and can be resolved by physically separating the conflicting parties or by direct managerial intervention. The *contemporary view* on the other hand looks at conflicts as inevitable outcomes of daily individual, group and organizational lives, which are caused primarily by the complexities of an internal system. Through such mechanisms as problem-solving techniques, the resolution of conflicts can lead to positive individual, group and organizational changes. However, some conflicts can lead to disastrous results such as rivalries, strikes and industrial unrests, injuries and even deaths. Five types of conflicts can be identified in the modern formal institutions.

### **6.2 Conflict within the individual**

It is a situation where a person feels uncertain about himself, his ability to perform a job, and the demands put to him by the organization. Examples include the individual who questions his capability to handle a difficult task and the individual who questions whether what the organization wants him to do is ethically right. This type of conflict is individual and psychological and it is not resolved fairly early, it can lead to more serious stages of developments.

### **6.3 Conflict between individuals**

This form of conflict is the most frequent in modern organizations. It concerns the quality of interactions between two organizational members. In the past, many managers felt that it was caused by severe personality differences between the parties. However, the maintenance supervisor may tell the manufacturing supervisor, "The quality control problems we are having are not due to defective equipment, but to your sloppy operating procedures."

### **6.4 Conflict between individuals and groups**

This type of conflict occurs when a member resists the influences of the group to conform to its certain practices. Acceptance into a group implies that the individual also accepts the norms and values of the group. Lack of acceptance can lead to conflict between the individual and the group and deviate behaviour.

### **6.5 Conflict between groups**

Usually termed intergroup conflict, this is a frequently occurring problem which faces managers in modern diverse and complex organizations. This type of conflict is related to such factors as groups fighting for scarce resources, differences of opinion about the way a unit should be managed, and the dependency of one group on another. For example, in building a new manufacturing facility, the production group may want a plant which allows long manufacturing runs that can provide greater cost that is flexible to customer needs and can be changed quickly to produce a different product.

### **6.6 Conflict between organizations**

Conflict is built into many economic systems through the competitive motive. Such conflicts result in new products, services, technologies, and innovations. On the other hand, organization conflict occurs when, for example, there is a disagreement on procedures and practices.

Conflicts can have both positive and negative results. Positive results can occur when individuals, groups and organizations as a consequence of conflicts produce new positive ideas, new technological skills, new dynamic group spirit and new perceptions about their jobs. If conflicts cannot be amicably resolved, nasty consequences can occur, manifesting themselves in violence at work, group rivalries, threats, low industrial production, loss of managerial control, and many personal problems.

The following paragraphs of this section of study special focus of attention be given to the sources and resolution techniques of conflicts in organizations.

### **6.7 Sources of conflict in work situations**

According to research findings there are *at least four major sources of conflict among and between groups and organizations; goal incompatibility; availability of resources; performance expectations; and organizational structures.*

#### **6.7.1 Goal incompatibility**

Goal incompatibility, which is defined as lack of agreement concerning the direction of group activity and the criteria for evaluating task accomplishment, is probably the most frequently identified source of conflict. **Two elements** contribute to the existence of goal incompatibility.

*First*, individual members bring with them different time and goal orientations, and this situation creates a state of high differentiation in organizations. For example, deliberations in an airline task force and operating representatives evaluate the alternative aircraft from a short-term, cost, and efficiency orientation, while the engineering members believe the two planes should be looked upon from a more long-term technical superiority viewpoint. Goal incompatibility may therefore, cause conflicts which may, if not resolved, lead to stressful situations.

#### **6.7.2 Availability of resources**

The *second* frequent contributor to conflict situations concerns the availability of resources, particularly when there are limited resources to go around. Managers must divide limited financial, physical, and human resources among different groups in what they consider is the most efficient, rational and equitable manner. However, what is considered as equitable by one group of employees may not be considered in a similar way by other groups of employees., a group that believes it is not receiving a fair share of the organizational resources often becomes hostile towards the organization and towards other groups. This conflict can result in withholding of information, disruptive behavioural tendencies, and similar untoward actions. This situation, if it is not resolved, can lead to stressful group atmosphere.

#### **6.7.3 Performance expectations**

The *third* source of conflict in organizations is performance of one group or member that affects the subsequent performance of other groups, on other words, one person's work cannot begin until another person provides some needed data. If the one member or group does not perform its task responsibilities, then the other member or group will not be able to do their work because their work is dependent on the performance of the first group. Therefore, job performance expectations can be a source of conflict.

#### **6.7.4 Organizational structure as a source of conflict**

In many organizations, the structure is as potential source of conflict and hence of stress. there can be function to function conflict in a functional structure, division to division conflict in a product structure, and function to division conflict in a matrix structure.



The most visible conflict caused by an organizational structure is the relationship between line and staff. The heart of the conflict lies in the line and staff members' different viewpoints of each other and their roles in the organizations. In essence, these viewpoints have their roots in the aforementioned causes of conflict, that is, line and staff members have different time and goal orientations. They compete for the same resources, and so on. Because of these multiple sources, the conflict between line and staff members can become heated and can be detrimental to the overall performance of the entire organization.

Let us examine briefly the sources of the line-staff conflict development. For instance, let us consider the relationship between the manufacturing (line) group and the personnel department (staff) in a plant producing heavy industrial equipment. The line function manager may view the personnel department in the following manner: -

**a.** Staff members interfere with normal operations. The activities of the personnel department can be viewed as an intrusion into the daily operations of the manufacturing area. For example manufacturing may want to promote an hourly worker to a salaried supervisory position as soon as possible; the personnel department may take three weeks to approve the promotion.

**b.** Staff members do not understand what is going on in the line functions. Because they make a suggestion that proves to be successful, personnel department tries to grab all the glory. When one of their ideas results in a failure, all personnel does is to hide behind their staff doors and claim that they had no control over what manufacturing does.

On the other hand, the manager of personnel administration may take the following statements about the line function department:-

- i. Line managers do not use staff functions properly. Due to many of the reasons noted above, line managers are reluctant to contact staff experts on issues. For instance, in promoting a particular hourly worker to a supervisory position, personnel did some close checking and found that not only would the person's fringe benefits be different, but there was a stipulation in the latest union contract that stated that the worker with the greatest seniority must be offered the job first.
- ii. Line managers resist the ideas of staff members. While they may not be knowledgeable in the total expertise of the line positions, staff members are experts in their own areas of activity.
- iii. Line managers think of staff positions as being excess baggage. Line managers frequently develop the view that anyone not directly involved with the product or services is not contributing to the overall performance of the organization.

## VI. CONCLUSION

These different viewpoints may lead to conflicts which may have stressful consequences in the organizations. Research studies show that these sources of conflict namely, goal incompatibility; availability of sources; performance expectations and organizational structures which are the main sources of conflict in organizations, are not all inclusive. They are, however, the most frequently reported and most serious situations.

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