Organizational Communication and Conflict Management within Work Groups
A Socio-Organizational Approach to Role and Function

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Abstract:

Organizational communication has come to receive great attention from thinkers of management science and managers of institutions, since it is considered among the factors through which the organization seeks to achieve its objectives and to reach solutions to the various organizational conflicts and problems that it faces. These are considered one of the natural phenomena that may occur in any organization, whether productive or service-oriented.

And in an attempt to enrich the cognitive field in the area of organizational communication and to examine the appropriate approach capable of resolving these conflicts, this study came, which shows its scientific importance in guiding officials and managers, and directing them toward the central role and the strategic function of effective communication in the organization, and the extent of its contribution to reducing the severity of conflict and the way of dealing with it.

Keywords: organization, organizational communication, conflict, organizational conflict management

Introduction:

Conflict is considered a phenomenon from which no organization is free, as organizations today live in an era of constant change in all political, economic, social, and scientific fields. There is no doubt that the human element is one of the most important components of the organization, which cannot function with efficiency and effectiveness without continuous interaction, whether through bonds of affection and cooperation or through creating opposition and conflict. The phenomenon of dealing with organizational conflict and managing it has become among the matters that take a not insignificant amount of managers' time; for alongside the administrative functions they perform, they allocate part of their time to managing organizational conflict, which has become a permanent phenomenon in organizations, and dealing with it has become one of the basic duties undertaken by contemporary managers.

The importance of conflict management also emerges given that relationships within modern organizations are complex and interwoven. These relationships usually do not continue for long within a climate of constant harmony and accord, because the multiplicity of parties within the organization generates many contradictions in viewpoints. Therefore, the importance of communication within any organization appears, and the necessity of paying attention to communication within the work environment.

The individual within the organization is in constant communication with others, since any organization is a group of human beings governed by certain laws and rules, and every member of the organization must communicate information, feelings, and emotions. There is communication between superiors and subordinates, communication with clients, and communication among colleagues themselves. Communication is thus a main and vital necessary process in building good human and functional relations within the organization. For organizations, communication appears in maintaining the flow and circulation of information within the organization, where it raises work efficiency whenever there are good communication systems.

1- The Theoretical Background of the Study:

1.1. The Research Problem:

The organization is exposed to many conflicts and sudden crises that threaten its entity and survival. This is what has made the creation of communication strategies within the organization more than a necessity imposed on various organizations in all their forms and activities, in order to face emergency and exceptional situations that arise in any organization without prior warning. This makes it confront those conflicts and crises and the resulting negative effects, which often lead to distorting the image of the organization and its reputation within society.

Communication occupies an important position for both the individual and the organization, as it is considered one of the important and sensitive topics that have attracted the attention of researchers in the fields of behavioral and social sciences, due to its major role in achieving effectiveness. It is like the basic nerve within any organization.

Communication is inevitable in any organization; however, the effectiveness of this communication is what becomes questionable. The organization requires an efficient pattern of communication; otherwise, poor communication leads to low morale and weak productivity, which results in the waste of returns and time. Just as effective communication works to create cooperation and cohesion among its actors, its lack of effectiveness has a negative impact, producing intense opposition and competition among organizational members, which leads to poor relationships among actors and the emergence of disagreements and conflicts between them.

Accordingly, the problem does not lie in whether actors practice communication or not, as we find it present in any activity or task they carry out, but the problem lies in whether actors practice it effectively or not.

In light of the above, the central question around which the subject of the study revolves is represented in the following question:

• Does organizational communication contribute to managing conflict between work groups within the organization?

Under this problem, subsidiary questions fall as follows:

1. Does effective organizational communication contribute to reducing the intensity of conflict within the organization?

2. Does the pattern of downward communication affect the settlement of organizational conflict between work groups within the organization?

1.2. Study Hypotheses:

The hypotheses of the study were formulated as follows:

The general hypothesis:

• Organizational communication contributes to activating conflict management strategies between work groups within the organization?

The subsidiary hypotheses:

1. Effective organizational communication has a major role in reducing the intensity of conflict within the organization.

2. Downward communication works on settling conflict between work groups within the organization.

1.3. Objectives of the Study:

- Revealing the nature of the existing relationship between organizational communication and conflict within the work group.

- Identifying the nature of the conflict occurring among workers within the organization.

- Examining the importance of formal downward communication and its relationship to the degrees of conflict among workers within the institution.

For this purpose, the descriptive analytical approach was adopted in analyzing, interpreting, and understanding the phenomenon that constitutes the subject of the study, and in reaching conclusions.

2- Conceptual Definitions:

2.1. Organizational Communication:

It is defined by Samborn Ressing as "the sending and receiving of information within the scope of a large and complex business organization" (Jawhar, 2000, p. 18).

Organizational communication is defined in the media dictionary as "communication within organizations and communication between those institutions and their environment. Organizational communication is also concerned with disseminating information among group members within specific boundaries represented by the organization in order to achieve its objectives" (Hijab, 2004, p. 13).

Organizational communication is the means through which management can transmit the organization's objectives to different levels. Interaction within the organization depends on communication as a tool for transmitting information, facts, and ideas from one person to another, from one group to another, and from one organizational level to another. Thus, organizational communication is the main resource of information among decision-making centers within the organization.

In this context, Ahmed Badawi sees that organizational communication refers to the totality of activities and actions taken to establish a relationship between actors, aiming to accomplish a unified project and to reach shared objectives. It also allows each individual within the enterprise to be known by his or her person and role within it, and works toward its prosperity, thereby ensuring his or her continuity and effectiveness within the organization. This type of communication takes place according

to the organizational structure that defines authorities, responsibilities, division of labor, and functional relations within the enterprise (Sarah, 2020, p. 24, 25).

Accordingly, organizational communication is the behavior represented in the response provided by workers in order to achieve a bilateral relationship among them within the work group. This behavior is based on mutual interaction (feedback).

2.2. The Organization:

It is agreed among researchers in the field of management and organization that the term organization has two meanings: the first does not refer to an organization as an entity in itself, while the second refers to one of the main functions of management.

The concept of the organization refers to a set of reciprocal relationships between individuals and groups, which lead to cooperation among them in order to achieve specific objectives (Kashk, 2003, p. 115).
Accordingly, the organization is goal-oriented social units, whose activities are coordinated, and within which individuals interact inside relatively clear and defined boundaries in order to achieve shared objectives.

2.3. Organizational Conflict:

It is a dispute or disagreement that arises between individuals or groups within the organization over issues related to work, such as tasks and organizational objectives, or disagreements over personal issues (Moussa, 2022, p. 29).

It is the collision, opposition, and difference among workers during work, which appears in the form of complaints and aggressive behavior on their part within the work group.

2.4. Work Groups:

They are workers at the lower or direct management level, and they include all workers regardless of their ranks (Sarah, 2020, p. 13).

3- The Importance of Organizational Communication:

Communication within the organization has great importance and a prominent role, as it is of a very high degree of importance whether these communications are formal or informal. Studies and research have shown that communication represents approximately 75% of the organization's activity. Diver and Scott state that without communication, organization cannot exist, nor can physical production advance, because communication is the only process that links individuals to one another within the work group. Without communication, there is no group. Communication is the bridge over which all types of technical information and human relations pass (Mohamed, 2003, p. 441).

Through this statement, the importance of organizational communication can be highlighted as follows:

- Organizational communication within the institution provides opportunities for creativity and innovation among workers. This is due to opening space for them by presenting their ideas and opinions that contribute to developing the institution.

- Communication, through control and follow-up, helps to raise the level of performance, and it also affects workers' attitudes, behaviors, and motivations toward work (Mohamed M., 2007, p. 17).

- It works to create a coherent physical awareness within the institution.

- Communication plays an important role in developing the feeling of belonging and loyalty to the institution.

- The continuous informing of decision-makers in the organization about detailed activities and accurate information that enable them to make sound decisions (Jawhar, Organizational Communication, 2000, p. 30).

- Communication contributes significantly to absorbing states of dissatisfaction, as through it workers express their orientations regarding various issues and matters, conveying their voices to decision-makers with the aim of achieving job satisfaction.

- Organizational communication is a purposeful means to ensure interaction and mutual exchange of the organization's various activities (Al-Muati, 2000, p. 204).

4- Organizational Communication and Its Directions:

In order for the organization to perform its normal activity, it includes a network or networks of communication. In general, these communications have been divided into types starting from formal channels up to informal channels. One of them is formal, determined by administrative authority and clarified by organizational charts and channels of direction and administrative hierarchy. A connection has been found between administrative organization and the communication process, as we find that the formal organization is the one that works on dividing labor and determining authorities and responsibilities, as well as functional relationships.

Alongside the formal organization, there exists an informal organization that arises from human and social relations among members of the organization, without management intervening in its design and without being subject to organizational regulations. It is determined among actors on personal bases (Sarah, 2020, p. 38).

Accordingly, communications take place according to the organizational structure that defines authorities, responsibilities, division of labor, and functional relationships within the institution. They are of two types: formal and informal.

4.1. Formal Communication:

This type of communication is achieved at the administrative level in establishments or institutions through their official communication channels in an agreed-upon manner. It relies on messages, memoranda, and reports. Every establishment has an official communication network that is defined when the organizational structure is set. It consists of communications that occur in the establishment in a vertical manner, that is, those that take place between the superior and subordinates or between subordinates and their superiors (Jouda, 2008, p. 156). It is viewed as all forms of communication that occur within governmental and non-governmental establishments and among different administrative establishments included in the organizational chart of the organization.

It occurs between the different administrative levels in the establishment, and it is considered one of the most important functions of management. The diversity of the material transmitted through the formal communication network is observed. This communication is represented in issuing instructions, orders, decisions, and directives from top management to middle and lower administrative levels. Accordingly, communications take on a formal character within a network of relationships governed by laws, systems, and instructions within the establishment (Na'imi, 2008, p. 208).

In every establishment, there exists what is known as the formal communication network "vertical and horizontal." Formal communication contributes to the flow of information, instructions, directives, and orders to subordinates. The formal organization is concerned with studying problems related to the human and social aspect within the establishment, as well as internal and external values and their importance to working individuals.

Formal communication is determined or required by the laws and systems of the organization. The formal communication process is often represented in communications that appear in the organizational chart, according to the systems, regulations, and general rules of the organization, as well as according to the formal organizational structure that governs it. These rules are often written, documented, or stipulated (Al-Harbi, 2025, p. 25, 26).

Formal communication is the communication through which information is transmitted among individuals within the establishment according to specific rules and controls. It has three directions: upward, downward, and horizontal. It is called formal communication because it is restricted to specific organizational positions. It is the method or channel that is officially predetermined and binding on all workers in the administrative organization to follow in all their communications during the performance of various activities within the establishment.

Formal communication takes the following forms:

4.1.1. Downward Communication:

These are communications whose direction is from top to bottom, where the flow and circulation of information move from higher levels to lower levels in the organizational structure. It represents a main tool for transmitting orders, instructions, and directives from supervisors and managers to subordinates and workers through the gradation of authority according to the organizational pyramid (Adoun, 2010, p. 36).

4.1.2. Upward Communication:

These are the messages directed from the lower levels in the organization to the higher levels. Most of them are information about production levels, or work problems, complaints, and suggestions related to performance and production. This type of communication has great importance because it gives subordinates the opportunity to participate in directing the work of the organization. This type of communication is linked to the leadership style prevailing within the organization. If it is democratic, upward communication becomes easy and possible; but if it is authoritarian, it becomes limited and difficult. In this regard, it can be emphasized that communication and its content are related to the type of leadership prevailing in the organization (Sarah, 2020, p. 41).

4.1.3. Horizontal Communication:

These are communications that take place between colleagues in the same work unit, or between those who are at the same organizational level, such as communication between employees, or communication between heads of departments, or between managers, that is, the same formal level of the establishment. Often, the exchange of information between colleagues is extremely important, especially if the exchange is necessary for coordination among them in order to accomplish certain duties and achieve the objectives and goals of the establishment. Horizontal communication can occur between two departments or services or more within the same establishment.

Among the advantages of horizontal communication is that it clearly allows information, opinions, and proposals to reach from all sides and at almost all times. This gives managers the opportunity to obtain what is necessary for making decisions. It also helps to increase and highlight the morale of employees, and addresses problems and conflicts between divisions due to direct means of communication, and reduces pressure on vertical communication.

In addition to integrating the efforts and interests of the establishment, and the cohesion of its employees across different levels toward achieving the organization's objectives and creating a spirit of cooperation, and benefiting from others' experiences and expertise, it also allows for direct communication (Al-Harbi, 2025, p. 129).

Formal communication is considered the most important type of communication in management and organizations and the most influential on the behavior of organizational members. It is an administrative process that seeks to produce, provide, transmit, and exchange data and information in order to achieve organizational objectives. This type of communication has received attention, as it is viewed as the only one capable of achieving the objectives of the establishment.

4.2. Informal Communication:

These communications take place outside the channels of formal communication. They are indirect communications whose existence accompanies formal communication within the organization and extends beyond it to outside the establishment. There are many ways through which information flows via informal communication, such as any occasion that brings workers together and allows the exchange of information among them (Al-Zu'bi & Ben Brika, 2013), such as personal communications, meetings, parties, trips, and informal gatherings.

This type of communication is considered the basis of individuals' interaction and formation, and it is also known as informal groups, which differ from formal work groups. This type is considered one of the most important means of cohesion of informal groups. It is characterized by continuous movement and frequent change, and it is not governed according to a specific order. It moves in all directions and at all levels, where workers within this organization are characterized by independence from the job and official authority.

These informal communications occur in uncontrolled and unregulated ways, and they are oral and not confirmed. The importance of informal communication appears clearly through the impact of the Hawthorne experiments and the ideas presented by the proponents of the human relations school, as they emphasize the role of these informal communications in achieving the objectives of the organization (Al-Rahman, 1992, p. 25).

Kanz and Kahn summarize the characteristics and features of this type of communication as follows:

1. Informal communication is a spontaneous and natural expression of various problems and issues, and this type of expression leads to better internal psychological satisfaction than formal communication.

2. When resorting to monitoring and filtering information, formal communication provides more abundant and detailed information.

3. Informal communication is characterized, compared to formal communication within the organization, by the speed and ease of spreading, as it may disseminate information before it is broadcasted through formal organizational communication channels.

4. As Bedian points out, informal communications have advantages in being fast, accurate, and successful, and they also meet work needs (Sarah, 2020, p. 46).

5- Theoretical Dimensions Explaining Conflict (Sociological Approaches):

It is found that conflict thought has a historical extension; it is not newly originated or limited to a specific society, and several researchers have addressed it.

5.1. Ibn Khaldun's Perspective:

He was the first to attempt to provide an intellectual glimpse into human history concerning conflict, and his philosophy rests on three points (Al-Louzi, 2003, p. 78):

1. The difficulty for individuals to live in isolation; they must meet, and this meeting will result in conflicts due to the overlap and entanglement of interests.

2. Justice must exist among people.

3. Establishing this justice and resisting aggression.

5.2. Karl Marx's Perspective:

Karl Marx's theory is characterized by its social and historical nature, as it focuses on understanding the changes that European societies went through. He is credited with greatly influencing the development of the labor movement, because his social theory was based on a realistic social study of the working class's life. Therefore, Marx believes that social relations cannot be understood separately from production relations, with the necessity of linking production relations to productive forces. His theory is also based on historical materialism and what it includes of production structures and patterns, classes and class conflict, social existence, and social consciousness.

From the Marxist perspective, classes and class conflict are formed based on the division of societies into those owning the means of production and those who do not. According to this perspective, class society consists of basic and non-basic classes. In slave societies, there are the owners of slaves; in feudal society, the feudal lords and peasants; in capitalist society, the bourgeoisie and proletariat (Zanqoufi & Qarzat, 2021, pp. 80-81).

He sees that every social system has factors leading to its disappearance, so that another social system appears in its place. Therefore, the essence of conflicts lies in the clash and contradiction between the interests of social classes, which are determined by the nature of production relations and lead to permanent class conflict (Tahoun, 1990, p. 289).

5.3. Parsons' Perspective:

The early functionalists in industrial sociology through the system-functional approach to action. His ideas are derived from Durkheim and Max Weber. According to him, the social mind comprises all types of human behavior driven and directed by the meanings existing within the organization, or, as he puts it, existing in the actor's mind, whether individual, group, or society.

His analyses focus on achieving adaptation to the material and social environment and integrating individuals into the social system to maintain the system's stability and achieve organizational goals. According to Parsons, the functions of the social system are distributed among achieving integration, stability, maintaining patterns of interaction, adaptation, and achieving the goal (Zanqoufi & Qarzat, 2021, pp. 112-113).

He believes that there must be harmony and balance in social relations, emphasizes the idea of the system, and rejects change and conflict. Hence, we see that the functionalist approach (Parsons' perspective) is the opposite of the Marxist approach.

6- The Role of Communication in Achieving Integration among Work Groups within the Organization:

Organizations derive their effectiveness from the nature of connections between functions, people, and tasks within them, and this is achieved through the relationships existing among the different branches and departments that make up the establishment. This allows management decisions to reach employees and employees' opinions to reach their supervisors. It contributes to promoting initiative and developing creativity toward the continuous improvement of the organization.

Institutional communication focuses on transmitting the necessary data and information from and to management. It functions as a process occurring within the establishment directed toward employees, in exchanging opinions and transferring information. Thus, good administrative communication works to develop information, ensure correct understanding, correct any false information or misleading positions, or ambiguity in policies, or malicious rumors, improve the relationship between workers and management, and strengthen social relationships among workers by enhancing communication among them.

Top management within organizations believes in organizational communication and its important and vital role. This makes them fully responsible for determining what is known as successful communication within the sector, first, understanding its types, and using it as an influential tool toward achieving objectives, identifying obstacles, and working to eliminate them. They continuously ensure a permanent environment within the organization that supports effective communication and transforms it into a deeply rooted culture among employees, unaffected by any other changes within the sector, by reinforcing its role within departments, providing full space for it, and supplying the necessary support for more positive outcomes (Al-Harbi, 2025, pp. 151-152).

The importance of communication as an important means in achieving integration among work groups is manifested through the basic functions it performs, which are:

a- Explaining the organization's policies and objectives.

b- Informing employees of their importance and the necessity of keeping them aware of all matters.

c- Informing them of all expected changes and explaining the motivations and reasons that led management to act, which leads to their acceptance of the matter.

d- Enhancing trust between management and employees, and between superiors and subordinates.

e- Understanding employees' opinions and providing them with the opportunity to participate and present suggestions, and the administration attempting to benefit from them, as the communication process represents the foundation governing the success and prosperity or failure and collapse of the organization.

f- Attempting to link the organization's objectives with the objectives of individuals.

g- Creating an atmosphere of constructive integration to reduce the possibility of conflict and disputes (Al-Harbi, 2025, pp. 155-156).

From the above, it becomes clear that the communication process represents the foundation that governs the organization's success and prosperity or the opposite.

7- Organizational Communication and Its Impact on Conflict Management Strategies:

This study aimed to determine whether organizational communication is a method among conflict management methods. The researcher found that some sources indicate that possessing communication skills helps reduce the intensity of conflicts present in different organizational environments and manage them effectively. Some studies pointed out that conflict management is one of the skills and competencies of organizational communication.

Goleman, in his book *Emotional Intelligence*, mentioned that there is increasing evidence that major ethical positions a person takes in life stem from the emotional capacities inherent within them. This is perhaps because spontaneous behavior is a channel of expression, and the seed of all spontaneous behaviors is a feeling that erupts to express itself in the form of actions.

Acquiring the ability to calm oneself essentially means mastering the ability to recover quickly from the emotional flood resulting from emotional takeover, which leads to the ability to control behaviors. Since the ability to hear, think, and speak clearly declines during emotional agitation, the ability to calm oneself represents a highly constructive and essential step, without which a person cannot make progress in resolving conflicts.

Relationship management is also one of the most important skills possessed by those with high emotional intelligence. Relationship management is the individual's ability to use their awareness and discernment of their own emotions and those of others to manage social interactions efficiently and successfully. This, in turn, ensures the existence of a clear communication network among individuals and an effective ability to control conflicts within the organization.

As conflicts, as previously explained, are unavoidable within the organizational environment, avoiding or neglecting them leads to serious consequences affecting the organizational environment and the effectiveness of the organization. This is because the lack of basic skills to initiate direct and open discussion and manage relationships constructively with other parties is the main reason for conflict escalation. Moreover, the fundamental reason that leads to the creation of conflict within the organizational environment is often individuals' inability to control their anger and manage their surroundings, which then reflects on the people around them.

In light of the above, it becomes clear that the lack of one of the communication skills and the ability to control oneself and restrain from frustrations leads to tension in workplace relationships and

creates a charged atmosphere characterized by conflict among individuals. Possessing the skill of relationship management contributes to avoiding both situations and yields the best results from healthy social relationships and interactions within organizations.

A manager's good knowledge of his employees enables him to manage existing conflicts among them in an effective and calm manner. He does not make judgments before gathering sufficient information about the situation and the cause of the conflict, while also attempting to verify the credibility of sources. Additionally, a successful manager maintains constant communication with employees even in the presence of resistance and turmoil.

Conflict management, from the perspective of the ability to deal with existing conflicts and disputes in the surrounding organizational environment, involves possessing negotiation skills and using the most effective methods to resolve disputes in a manner suitable to the surrounding circumstances. Dealing with various types of people, especially those who are difficult to handle, and managing difficult situations with diplomacy, high policy, prudence, and emotional intelligence, not only reduces the intensity of conflict but also reveals underlying conflicts and addresses them openly through discussions that include all parties involved in the conflict. It also supports solutions based on the principle of win-win for all (Moussa, 2022, pp. 92-93).

Conclusion:

Conflict in the life of the human being is considered among the most important phenomena, and it is the inevitable result of the environment of difference existing in the human self that comes from friction and interaction between groups striving hard to achieve their goals, so conflict is a state of imbalance that the individual is exposed to in the organization as a result of the contradiction of goals or the struggle for the individual to obtain what he wants.

And the workplace is that which brings together different persons and professionals who work together within the context of this environment, and they seek to achieve the desired objectives of the company, and this environment should be characterized by cooperation and harmony among individuals, yet it is natural sometimes that some conflicts and disagreements arise among them, but it is not natural that an atmosphere of problems and conflicts prevails for a long period in the work environment, as this may indicate the existence of a real dysfunction in the work environment. And it is possible that a work environment filled with conflicts may negatively affect employees, and this will in turn affect the level of productivity in a general way, and on the spirit of interaction among colleagues.

Therefore, communication should be strengthened and the culture of constructive cooperation should be strengthened in the workplace, since effective communication is a core element to avoid and manage conflicts in the work environment, so the organization should instill this culture and reinforce it within the team, and encourage it toward openness and the expression of its opinions and feelings and the presentation of its suggestions in a clear and respectful manner, for that reduces the occurrence of conflicts and disagreements and avoids the spread of rumors and negative talk in the workplace, and enables the creation of an environment that supports cooperation and solving problems one by one through dialogue and understanding and mutual cooperation.

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