CHAPTER 2

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

In today's world, most of us realize that conflict is going to be a part of doing business, a normal part of doing business. Some of us even understand that conflict has many positive side effects. Conflict has the potential to enhance the quality of decisions; clarify values; increase the group cohesiveness; stimulate creativity; reduce tensions; and reduce dissatisfaction, Johnson & Johnson (1997).

Machiavelli and Hobbes initiated the basic stance of cynical realism about human society, Collins (1974). Individuals' behaviour is explained in terms of their self-interests in a material world of threat and violence. Social order is seen as being founded on organized force. There is an ideological realm of belief (religion, law), and an underlying world of struggles over power; ideas and morals. These are not prior to interaction but are socially created, and serve the interests of parties to the conflict.

This chapter will draw attention to some empirical studies examining conflict that arises in organisation. Conflict has always been regarded as having a negative impact on an organisation. For instance in a study that was conducted by the Hatfields (1995) looking at the relationship between conflict management styles, levels of conflict, general reaction to work and the four types of individual outcomes experienced by employees. The results of the study indicated that the more conflict individuals experienced on the job, the lower their job satisfaction and their outcomes were.

However, Mullins, 1999 [p2] quoted by Edwards & Walton, actually states that there are times where conflict can be a positive force that stimulates interest and creativity, which in turn identifies and assists in resolving problems and
promotes group cohesiveness. A study conducted by Esquivel & Kleiner (1996),
mentioned once that if conflict is understood and managers are aware of the
different types of conflict that exist, A-type and C-type conflict, it will make conflict
easier to digest and manage. Conflict can actually help to enhance the decision-
making process in an organisation.

Supervisors who learn to deal with conflict constructively can use it as a catalyst
for creativity and change. Workplace conflict is usually based on either issues or
personalities. Disagreement on issues may revolve around differing opinions
about specific issues involving the workplace. Personality conflict is often
emotional and based on present and past confrontations. The first step in
resolving a workplace conflict is to determine whether it is of the hot or cool
variety. Hot conflict boils up when personalities clash and an emotional
confrontation (overt commission) results. Cool conflict emerges when co-workers
have divergent opinions about some high profile issue in the workplace. The
ensuing debate customarily revolves around what everyone feels his or her
organisation or department should, could or ought to do, Van Auken (1993).

Conflict has a valuable effect on the outcome of a team’s decision-making ability.
Therefore, it is also important to identify the right type of conflict. A positive
outcome to a work team conflict depends on the types of differences that lead to
the conflict. These differences dictate the type of conflict, C-type or A-type. C-
type conflict fosters creativity, open and honest communication and the utilization
of members’ skills and abilities that tend to improve team effectiveness. Hence,
C-type conflict allows members to contribute openly and honestly to the team’s
decision-making process while maintaining acceptance by team members and
creating greater commitment. A-type conflict does just the opposite. A-type
conflict decreases the effectiveness of the group by allowing personal feelings or
someone’s own agenda to deter the members from the team’s objective.
Creativity is limited by the members’ reduced ability to contribute input due to the
increasing hostility, anger and the elimination of trust. Team members’ input may
be shut down which creates a loss of commitment to the team's decision-making process. A-type conflict also has a future effect on team members. Team members may choose not to interact at a later time due to the personalized nature of the conflict.

Conflict exists in team interaction but the key to an effective work team is to manage conflict Kleiner, H.Brian (1996). The manager's role is to choose appropriate conflict management techniques and keep conflict at a reasonable level. There are many methods theorized and practiced, and Kleiner focused on the conflict management strategies used by Amason (1995). It is critical to remember the importance of fostering creativity, keeping communication open and actively engaging members' skills and abilities in the decision-making process. These are the characteristics of an effective team. Since these are important, the team leader must steer the team through C-type conflict while avoiding A-type

Conflicts can be managed in a variety of ways. The present study focused on the handling of the conflict by the adversaries. Other strategies, including third party intervention and organizational structural methods for reducing conflicts, were not part of the analysis. Previous research in Turkey has shown that conflict resolution through formal appeal mechanisms and intervention by human resources departments is rare Kozan/İlter (1994). The adversaries behaviours, either in direct contact or through intermediaries, are therefore the most crucial element of conflict management. Research on the conflict behaviour of the adversaries has mostly focused on styles of conflict management.

Honesty is one simple concept that can get complicated when you apply it to reality. It is important to recognize the degree of honesty—and how it plays into conflict resolution. Since nearly everyone values honesty from others, it would make sense that people would be honest with others in return. Being honest and accepting honesty from others minimizes conflict and can keep it from escalating.
Honesty increases our trust level, which allows us to be more comfortable when conflict arises. We pick levels of honesty in different life situations. Think about the times you were completely honest, somewhat honest, somewhat dishonest, or completely dishonest. The choices on the honesty scale is key to the response to conflict. We should think about whom we surround ourselves with to keep honest (Collins, 2001 [p.3] quoted in Peterson, Mary, 2002).

There was a study by Jessica Katz Jameson, 1999, to develop a model for the assessment and management of intra-organisational conflict. The framework was based on the previous work of Sheppard (1984) and Elangovan (1995, 1998) in suggesting that a contingency-based model of strategy selection must include attention to characteristics of the conflict, desired outcomes of the participants, and awareness of available conflict management strategies.

Conflict occurs whenever interdependent parties perceive incompatible goals. Conflict will refer to situations that occur when two or more people working within the same organisation perceive differences in beliefs, values, or goals which impact their ability to work together and/or affect the work environment. Intra-organisational conflicts may result over issues such as performance standards, task completion, policy interpretation or interpersonal differences. A distinction is made between informal and formal conflicts. Informal conflicts may occur among co-workers, employees and supervisors, within or between groups and among departments within an organisation. Informal conflicts often occur when there are differences in values, beliefs, or opinions regarding how work gets completed, how resources or tasks are distributed, or where priorities should lie. Formal conflicts, on the other hand, occur when there is an alleged human rights or policy violation. As formal conflicts are more likely to lead to litigation, these are often handled in accordance with official corporate conflict management procedures. Due to the nature of informal conflicts, such procedures rarely apply.
Shapiro and Rosen (1994) had performed a study that specifically addresses the effect of conflict characteristics on managerial intervention strategies. Using a survey of 74 university managers, the researchers collected examples of conflicts in which managers considered intervening, as well as the specific intervention decisions made in each conflict. In a content analysis of the issues in conflict, they found four types: personality conflicts, policy/procedure conflicts, conflicts over authority/responsibility, and resource scarcity conflicts. Shapiro and Rosen categorized the latter two conflict types as task conflicts. The labelling of task conflicts was used to distinguish conflicts based on issues such as resource allocation from those resulting from differences in interpersonal or management style.

Jehn (1995) defined task conflict as conflict that exists when there are disagreements among group members about the content of tasks being performed, including differences in viewpoints, ideas, and opinions. Relationship conflict is defined as interpersonal incompatibilities among group members, which typically includes tension, animosity, and annoyance among members within a group. Shapiro and Rosen's (1994) study confirmed that managers selected different strategies when conflicts were described as task as opposed to relational.

In an academic research, Jehn, Karen (2000), hypotheses were developed to link proportional conflict composition and perceptual conflict composition to team effectiveness. Team effectiveness can be defined in terms of three aspects: (1) the extent to which the productive output of the group meets performance standards (e.g., individual and group level performance), (2) the extent to which the team develops processes that enhance the capability of members to work together again (e.g., commitment, cohesiveness), and (3) the extent to which group members' experience in the team is satisfying (e.g., member satisfaction). We examine the effects of proportional and perceptual conflict composition on
team effectiveness across two different work team contexts (management teams and production units).

Jehn, Karen (2000) compared the levels of the three different types of conflict within a group it is a crucial aspect of a team's conflict composition. Proportional conflict composition describes the relationship among the three types of conflict (task, relationship, and process), as the level of each type of conflict is proportional to the other two and to the overall level of conflict within the group, rather than as an absolute level or amount of any one type. Relationship conflict involves disagreements based on personal and social issues that are not related to work. Task conflict describes disagreement about the work that is being done in the group. Process conflict centres on task strategy and delegation of duties and resources.

A simple example demonstrates how members may experience the work group differently depending on the amount of each type of conflict that exists in proportion to other types. A group of members who experience a moderate amount of constructive task conflict and no other conflict (no relationship or process conflict), for example, would have a different experience than will members of another group with the same amount of task conflict but also a high proportional level of relationship conflict.

A Schwartz's (1992) study investigated the effect of sub-cultural differences on conflict management styles in Turkey. This is a country where marked sub-cultural differences exist due to rapid industrialization and concerted efforts to modernize a traditional culture. Change has taken place in an uneven pace at various segments of the society. Turkey's geographical location at the interface of East and West has also contributed to the emergence of a culture that embodies a duality in its values. Today, the population exhibits a mosaic of values, and the diversity of its culture makes Turkey a good choice for studying intra-cultural effects. Schwartz's (1992, 1994) values inventory was used as the
basis for defining subcultures in Turkey. Given the increasing use of his measures in cross-cultural research, demonstration of sub-cultural effects in one country may stimulate research on subcultures in other countries or the inclusion of sub-cultural level of analysis in cross-cultural studies.

Strictly defined categories are insufficient to analyse cultural conflict in Miami, Florida. Although conventional analysis separates Miami's population into African-American, Caucasian and Hispanic groups, new methodologies posit that these categories are social inventions instead of ethnic identities, and individual responses to cultural, economic and political tensions tend to fluctuate rather than define themselves along definitive ethnic lines. Constructivist approach is used to analyse the notion of "culture clash" in Miami, Florida. It argues that the identities and the issues around which groups unite and compete are best conceptualised as inventions. A focus on the invention process itself provides valuable insights into cultural politics in Miami because, while these identities are fluid, they are not arbitrary. They closely reflect the tug and pull of vested interests in changing socio-economic contexts over time. It emphasizes the relevance of the global context in understanding the form and content of ethnic and racial relations in Miami.

Conflict is a natural and inevitable part of all close relationships, Cahn, D.D. (1992). Inextricably linked to people's management of conflict is their ability to communicate effectively. For example, Canary and Spitzberg (1987) found that integrative, or cooperative conflict strategies that promote relational outcomes (e.g., seeking information or commonality, attempting to understand the other, compromising) were positively related to communication competence. In contrast, distributive, or competitive strategies (e.g., shouting, blaming, threatening) and avoidant behaviours (e.g., evading topic, denying knowledge or involvement) were viewed as less competent. In general, conflict strategies and communication competence significantly affect relational outcomes, such as trust, control mutuality, intimacy, and satisfaction.
Another research has been carried out to understand the conflict and to focus on the dynamic role of conflict and its role in creating a more effective work team. The use of work teams is becoming more and more prominent in organisations today, Kleiner, H.Brian (1996). Corporate America is learning that empowered work teams can and do offer creative and competitive solutions to problems such as product quality, morale, productivity and most importantly, the viability of the organisation. With a variety of corporate issues needing to be solved, there are many types of teams used for each situation such as cross-functional, continuous improvement and quality improvement. In some instances, team membership includes customers and suppliers in an effort to get closer to the customers’ needs and requirements.

According to the findings of Amason (1995), a team leader must use a strategy to build an effective culture before, during and after the team interactions. Amason (1995) suggested the following strategy to get the best possible outcome from conflict:

1. Disseminate a full agenda early. An effective meeting does not just happen; it is planned.
2. State the philosophy for the team and back up that philosophy. Stating the philosophy behind team decision-making would be helpful.
3. Providing the right environment for the meeting. The appropriate environment could increase the team's performance.
4. Have in mind Behavioural strategies to run the meeting before it begins. Structuring the team meeting is important; the behaviour of the team leader keeps the meeting productive.
5. Keep a sense of where the discussions are going. To further encourage cooperativeness and openness, the team leader may need, at least initially, to facilitate and strictly monitor team discussions in order to limit personalized statements made during heated debate.
(6) Channel discussion from A-type conflict toward C-type conflict. The team leader needs not only to monitor team discussions, but also to channel discussion from A-type conflict back toward C-type conflict. It is not sufficient merely to monitor the process - the leader must act to keep the group focused on the positive aspects of open discussions.

(7) Support the team. A leader must continually exhibit behaviour that shows support for the team. As discussed above, there is a need to focus the team so that it is functioning as a team and not a collection of individuals.

(8) Be proactive and reactive, not passive. To take many of the concepts above and roll them into one set of actions, the team leader must actively support a positive culture for the team. The development of this culture is done before, during, and after each team interaction.

Another research done in Stansfield Business School in Singapore, McKenna (1995), addresses important aspect of dealing with conflict and assesses cross-cultural differences in relation to it.

Cross-cultural differences compound issues of conflict resolution, but the approaches to developing trust and openness in relationship building are universal. In 1993, a research on a US company in the computing and telecommunications industry in Singapore involved 60 persons; 22 were expatriates from Canada and mainly the USA, and 38 were Singaporeans, all of Chinese descent. The proposed work involved the use of a revised conflict mode instrument to investigate styles of handling conflict, Thomas and Kilmann (1974). The results of the investigation show that most expatriate employees preferred competing, collaborating and compromising styles, while most local managers preferred avoidance and accommodation. It concluded, initially, that the differences in styles between these two sets of managers has developed into a cosy tolerance of the status quo which has resulted from culturally different styles of dealing with conflict. This does not help the business to become more effective, or indeed, for potential areas of conflict to be dealt with. It was
explained that Americans are dominating, sometimes integrating, but always assertive. Asians, on the other hand, are sometimes accommodating, sometimes avoiding, but always non-assertive.

Conflict is an inevitable aspect of life. If the process of conflict resolution is viewed as an opportunity for growth and change in a work environment, the potential for a positive outcome is great. On an individual level, the ability to solve problems or manage change plays an important role in one's success. In the same way, the overall ability of a company to solve problems through collaborative efforts has a strong impact on the organisation's bottom line and overall success, Kemp-Longmore (2000). It is important to be familiar with current or prospective employer's grievance policies, statements of commitment to diversity, and equal opportunity practices. Most companies have policies that provide guidelines for conflicts. Unfortunately, many of these policies were created from a reactionary perspective, not a preventative one. They have been designed to address problems and conflicts at the point when a problem requires intervention for damage control. Forward-thinking companies strive to create an atmosphere with built-in opportunities to voice concerns and participate in the process of change on a continual basis.

Communication skills are essential in conflict resolution. Taking it upon yourself to improve these skills should rank high on your list of things to do upon entering today's workplace. The fine art of listening is a great starting point for increasing your communication skills. We would learn more from listening than speaking. A slightly more involved aspect of active listening is developing the skill of recognizing personality types and styles of communication. Many communication consultants and trainers have over the years used charts that categorize people into groups of personality types. Communication is the key to managing conflict, solving problems, and producing your desired outcome of any interaction Kemp-Longmore (2000).
Heinecken and Gromko (1999) describe an action research approach undertaken by graduate students to effect a policy change at a midwestern university in USA. The paper is a narrative analysis that revealed the types of conflicts that teaching assistants at the university were encountering in their classrooms. Heinecken and Gromko (1999). Toward that end, they enlisted the aid of representatives from the constituent groups (e.g., Administrative Staff Council, Classified Staff Council, Faculty Senate, Graduate Student Senate, and Undergraduate Student Government) to gather widespread evidence of support in the form of resolutions from each of the constituent groups for the establishment of a conflict management program on campus.

The narratives revealed that internalised conflicts originated from experiences of perceived gender and/or racial discrimination, agonistic communication styles and/or outright physical aggression, and systematic silencing through exclusion from decision-making processes. Internalisation of conflict resulted in emotions of fear and anger, as well as low self-esteem. Individual perceptions of the relative seriousness of a conflict varied depending on the student's perception of their rank within the system, alternative behaviours available to them besides fighting back or avoidance, and the level of emotional support they received from faculty or administration.

Research has shown that gender and race relations in the outside world affect interpersonal classroom dynamics and educational practices. McEwen, Roper, Bryant and Langa (1990). Lewis (1990) argued that women's everyday lives, as oppressed people, are an intimate and inseparable part of their classroom experiences. For women, as well as ethnic minorities, how schooling is experienced may stem from their subordinate place in the social and institutional systems (Hooks, 1994).

Johnsrud (1995) believes that institutions must pay more attention to the climate and to the quality of faculty-student interactions the climate fosters. A focus on
interpersonal skills is necessary because, as Bosworth (1994) argues, university students need to possess social skills for collaborative learning and research.

One way that institutions have encouraged expression of conflicts at early stages and increased communication skills is through training educators and students in conflict management (Conflict Resolution Education Network, 1998a). Peace education programs are purported to be an effective means of reducing the potential for violence (Kmita and Berlowitz, 1993). Conflict management programs in elementary and high schools have resulted in less physical violence, less disruptive behaviour, and improved academic performance in Conflict Resolution Education Network (1998b); Johnson & Johnson (1994).

Stevahn, Johnson, Johnson, Green and Laginski (1997) found that when conflict management training was integrated into academic courses, students who received the training scored significantly higher on achievement tests than students who did not. Training led to reduced tension, enhanced student self-esteem and responsibility, and improved effective problem-solving skills, Gross (1994), Stuart (1991). Jacobson and Lombard (1992) found that school mediation programs increased student mediators' self-esteem and sensitivity to others, as well as their problem-solving skills. Research has also shown that conflict management training can improve social and communication skills Openshaw (1992). Thus, studies show conflict management skills enhance academic achievement, self-esteem, and problem-solving among elementary and secondary school students.

Blake and Mouton (1973) post five categories of conflict management. The first, authoritarianism, derives from a results-orientation that, at its extreme, does not concern itself with relationships among people. The second, smoothing over, originates from people-orientation that, at its extreme, does not concern itself with results. When people show neither concern for results nor concern for people other than self, the category of conflict management is withdrawal or
silence. Interactions among those concerned for results and those concerned with relationships with people result in compromise. The final form of conflict management, according to Blake and Mouton, is one where individuals express and work through their conflicts to a mutual satisfaction in which no one wins and no one loses. It represents genuine resolution.

Nancy Bandy, the managing director of Transitions Consulting Group, an organisation that works to help companies use training initiatives to meet challenges in the work environment presented "The Art of Conflict Resolution" at the Mechanical Service Contractors of America's (MSCA's) Annual Education Conference. Everyone has a different view of conflict, some people have the traditional view, which means that all conflict is harmful and should be avoided. Others have human relations view, which posits that conflict is just one part of group interaction and should be accepted. There is also the interactionist view, which says that conflict is a positive force and is absolutely necessary for a group of workers to perform effectively.

Conflict can result in lost productivity and could jeopardize working relationships. Problems arise when conflict is left to escalate. However, if handled appropriately, it may be a beneficial force and help company survival. More organisations fail because they have too little conflict, not because they have too much. Western Union, Eastern Airlines, and Kmart entities ran into trouble because of stagnation. Instead of acknowledging conflict, which would have brought up detrimental problems, the companies decided to stick with the status quo Siegel, (2002).

There are two types of conflict: functional and dysfunctional. In order to identify if the conflict in organisation is functional or dysfunctional, we must determine the impact it is having on the performance of workers, Siegel (2002).
Conflict can be functional if it helps people to air their problems, enhances the understanding of issues and concerns, or prevents the company from slipping into stagnation. Functional conflict will have functional outcomes. It will help to improve the quality of decisions that are made with the company and will stimulate greater creativity and innovation. Also, it will help to release tension and bring workers together to achieve the company's goals.

When conflict is dysfunctional, it prevents cooperation and makes communication between people more difficult. Instead of challenging ideas and beliefs, it only provokes rejection of ideas and makes people more inflexible. The outcome inevitably hinders productivity and teamwork, and inhibits forces for change.

According to Bandy, the key is to let conflict exist, but do not let it escalate to dysfunctional conflict. To deal with conflict and to keep it from becoming dysfunctional, Bandy said organisation must conduct a resolution meeting. The goal is to bring in the parties involved in the conflict and walk them through the following six steps. This action is designed to resolve the conflict, create a positive outcome, and prompt appropriate changes.

1. When conducting a meeting, first determine the nature of the conflict. Describe the potential losses if the conflict continues.
2. Have each party describe their desired outcome of the conflict. What would each party like to see happen?
3. Decide where the parties agree and come up with shared interests in the conflict.
4. The next step is to create a common vision, one that will please both parties.
5. Both parties must work together to create options for resolving the problem. Brainstorm some options that will help to support the common vision.
6. Finally, make sure that both parties commit to the ideas they have come up with. Make sure that action is taken after the meeting.
Inter role conflict arises from incompatible role requirements between two or more work-related roles. Lui, Ngo and Tsang (2001) had a study which examined its effect on job satisfaction and propensity to leave. Data was collected from a sample of 251 professional accountants employed in Hong Kong firms. Results from hierarchical regression analyses revealed that inter role conflict was associated with low job satisfaction and high propensity to leave. In addition, they found that professional commitment moderated the relationship between inter role conflict and propensity to leave. Professionals face a commitment dilemma or an inter role conflict because organisational and professional role requirements are always incompatible, Jackson and Schuler (1985).

With exposure to computer-mediated communication increasing in the workplace and in daily life, it is not surprising that working adults find value in the computer-mediated learning environment. Simply put, computer-mediated communication (CMC) includes any form of organized interaction between people, utilizing computer networks as the medium of communication Romiszowski (1997). The most common CMC vehicles are e-mail and newsgroups. Working adults approach the online learning environment with an existing set of communication styles and skills honed on the job and throughout their working life. Some may already have college degrees and achieved success in their field. This combination of diverse styles, backgrounds, and experiences, coupled with specific needs and expectations about the learning process itself, may lead to conflict online. If not managed properly, online conflict will adversely affect the learning experience of members. The successful management of conflict begins with an understanding of the needs and expectations of the working adult learner. It is essential to set the stage for a healthy computer-mediated learning environment by clearly stating learner and instructor roles and responsibilities and the online code of conduct. A good starting point would be a re-statement of Shea's (1994) rules of online communication:

1. Remember the human.
2. Adhere to the same standards of behaviour that you follow in real life.
3. Know where you are in cyberspace.
4. Respect other people's time and bandwidth.
5. Make yourself look good online.
7. Help keep flame wars under control.
8. Don’t abuse your power.

The understanding and management of conflict plays a central role in HRM practice and theory. From Senge’s view, visible conflict is a sign that a team is learning (Senge, 1990, pp. 155-156). Conflict can be seen as an accepted and important part of organisational life, and a necessary part of change and development, for organisational learning (Stacey, 1993, p. 236) as well as for individual learning (Vasilyuk, 1984, p unknown). Managers are expected to embrace and foster conflict as an important development tool.