Variation in Conflict Behaviours at Departments and Levels of Management

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Abstract

Conflict within an organization is ubiquitous. Usually, an organization as a whole is taken as the unit of observation in conflict research. However, the task, processes, and relationship as conflict-sources are more likely to be homogeneous within but heterogeneous across functions. We proposed and studied differences of conflict sources, bullying behaviour, emotions and resolution methods, different business functions, and management levels in a stable public sector steel manufacturing organization. The study found the overall level of conflict and bullying behaviour to be low and stress level to be high. Confrontation and negotiation were more used as a conflict-resolution strategy. Age and experience did not have a significant influence on conflict behaviour. However, task, process, and relationship conflicts were significantly different among departments. Significant differences were observed in bullying behaviours and associated emotions. Confrontation was found to be a major conflict resolution strategy that varied across departments. Process conflict varied significantly among different levels of management. The higher level of management experienced greater process conflict. Middle-level managers reported significantly higher withholding of information, unrealistic targets, belittling, criticism, and excessive monitoring. Middle-level managers extensively used confrontation to resolve conflicts.

Keywords : **conflict, emotions, bullying behaviour, resolution strategy, public sector, steel**

JEL Classification : J5, J53, L61, M51, M14

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Conflict is inevitable in any organization and can have both negative and positive effects. Conflict adversely impacts productive time, cost, stress, and absenteeism. Dysfunctional conflict can decrease productivity, trust, motivation, creativity, commitment, and communication level ; in general, it creates a hostile working atmosphere. Conflict research has negotiation, mediation, trust, conflict management styles, and performance as broad sub-themes (Caputo, Marzi, Maley, & Silic, 2019). The literature review below discusses sources of conflict, management styles, bullying behaviour, and emotions.

Literature Review

For this study, the research outcomes on conflict sources, bullying behaviour, emotions exhibited, and conflict resolution strategies have been reviewed from the literature.

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Sources

Conflicts in the workplace can be categorized by task, process, or relationship (Weingart, Behfar, Bendersky, Todorova, & Jehn, 2015). Interpersonal conflict in task conflicts escalates to relationship conflicts and is moderated by self-control, indicating individual differences (Jimmieson, Tucker, & Campbell, 2017). If the task conflict is enhanced, simultaneous avoidance of relationship conflict is difficult (Rispens, 2012). A multidimensional conflict can negatively affect the performance, and such impact would be higher for smaller organizations (Flink, 2015). Task conflict can reduce job satisfaction, but adequate leadership and employee resources can reduce the stress associated with conflicts (De Clercq & Belausteguigoitia, 2017).

Literature has indicated culture and country-level differences in the conflict management process. A research found that Koreans extensively used solution - orientation strategies and were judicious about using power in case of conflict with subordinates ; whereas, Americans preferred either non - confrontation or control strategies in organizational conflicts (Lee & Rogan, 1991). Similarly, the impact of religion on conflict management indicated variation (Randeree & El Faramawy, 2011). Conflict expressions vary depending on how direct it is and how intensely it is opposed, which depends on the cultural contexts and people involved (Weingart et al., 2015). Thus, it is important to note that people, culture, country-level differences, and religion play a vital role in conflict management.

Task conflict can be managed through agreeable behaviour and thereby increase the group satisfaction level, but neutral or disagreeable behaviour would have a negative effect on satisfaction (DeChurch & Marks, 2001). Thus, the conflict management norms moderate the link between task conflict and destructive reactions to conflict (Ayoko, Callan, & Härtel, 2008). Despite of compromising and obliging, the acts such as integrating or avoiding enhances relationship quality in a task conflict (Lu & Wang, 2017). Nevertheless, another study revealed that nurses with higher emotional intelligence used integrating, obliging, compromising, and dominating conflict resolution styles, but nurses with lower emotional intelligence used avoiding as a conflict resolution style (Chan, Sit, & Lau, 2014).

Bullying

Harmful and malicious workplace behaviours can also be defined as bullying behaviour (Saunders, Huynh, & Goodman-Delahunty, 2007). Bullying has been categorized as work-related, personal, and physical or threatening (Bartlett & Bartlett, 2011). It is conceptualized as the result of an inefficient coping mechanism for conflict, which is a destructive factor to the team and organization (Baillien, Neyens, De Witte, & De Cuyper, 2009). It is an outcome of the interaction between the structure and processes of power imbalance, perceived cost, dissatisfaction, and frustration (Salin, 2003). Bullying behaviour is seen as a work stressor (Van den Brande, Baillien, De Witte, Vander Elst, & Godderis, 2016). Bullies are called corporate psychopaths having broad and significant impacts on conflict, bullying, employee well-being, and counterproductive work behaviour (Boddy, 2014). Immediate managers are perceived as bullies associated with conflict events, emotional reactions, and counterproductive behaviours. Higher levels of bullying can predict workplace counterproductive behaviours (Ayoko, Callan, & Härtel, 2003). Negative organizational impacts of workplace bullying have been classified by cost, productivity, reputation, legal issues, and organizational culture (Bartlett & Bartlett, 2011).

A research found that job stress had a positive and significant effect on counterproductive work behaviour ; whereas, emotional intelligence had an opposite effect (Farrastama, Asmony, & Hermanto, 2019). Bullying was found to be associated with employees' quit intention, sickness absenteeism, lower productivity, commitment, poor mental health, and low organizational satisfaction (Hoel & Cooper, 2000). Such behaviours get amplified during organizational change when the conflict and job insecurity are higher (Baillien & De Witte, 2009). It also

negatively impacts both the individual and the organization (Bartlett & Bartlett, 2011). Outcomes to individuals have been viewed in terms of impacting work, health (physical and emotional), and affective domains such as motivation (Bartlett & Bartlett, 2011). The bullying behaviour violates local laws ; it is an ethical responsibility of the organization to provide a safe, professional, and respectful workplace (Saunders et al., 2007). Organizations with many employees, male-dominated, and industrial organizations have the highest prevalence of victimization due to bullying (Einarsen & Skogstad, 1996).

Emotion

Conflict produces several individual emotional outcomes, which subsequently form workgroup emotions. Workplace bullying was found to have a significant negative correlation with affective commitment (McCormack, Casimir, Djurkovic, & Yang, 2006). A research indicated that the emotional intelligence abilities of problem-solving and impulse control were directly related to how participants managed conflict at the workplace (Hopkins & Yonker, 2015). Accordingly, task and relationship conflict also influenced the factors such as burnout, cynicism, and interpersonal strain at work (Shaukat, Yousaf, & Sanders, 2017). Fear, anger, and shame were documents as the results of bullying (Ford, Myrden, & Kelloway, 2016 ; Lewis, 2004).

Teams with less-well-defined emotional intelligence climates were associated with increased task and relationship conflict (Ayoko et al., 2008). Bullying and harassment at work are known as widespread problems. The link between emotions and conflict has started receiving attention both in terms of the conflict and emotion studies and adding values to the literature. However, the conflict and associated processes in public sector manufacturing organizations have not been investigated much. The organizational context and work processes would make it unique compared to other organizations.

Organizational Environment

This section discusses about the organizational context concerning the study objectives. Industrial relations are indicated to be complicated, indirect, and impersonal. Thus, there is a need to develop a culture that inculcates mutual understanding and shared feeling through a sense of values to reduce industrial disputes (Biswas & Chakraborty, 2019). The role of multiple unions in one organization could create a conflict of interest and poor industrial relations. It needs foresight of astute human resource professionals to manage through rules and create a win-win situation among the conflicting parties (Datta & Madhavi, 2018). A study used the fundamental interpersonal relationship orientation - behaviour scale and revealed a significant difference between private and public sector employees. The private sector employees displayed a stronger interpersonal need than public sector employees (Mitra & Chatterjee, 2016). Contrastingly, the complexity of conflict in a large public sector manufacturing organization could be intuitive.

The steel plant, where this study has been conducted, has 50 years of fame and is one of the integrated steel plants. The conglomerate has a good working environment, and employees have a good relationship with peers and seniors. Employment is sought after in this organization for the benefits and compensation, job security, and career growth path. The work practices, procedures, work-life balance, and overall employee well-being have better attractions than what have been in other organizations. The executive cadre employees are recruited through a national level test and selection process. They undergo orientation programs for being posted and could be transferred to different plants. Thus, a level of uniformity has been inferred. The conflict sources, emotional responses, bullying behaviours, and resolution style at the department level is anticipated to be uniform in a particular plant.

Realistic group conflict theory proposed the perceived competition for limited resources to be the cause of conflict. Organizational conflict theory indicates various factors such as interpersonal conflict, role conflict, and

expectations to be some of the causes of conflict. The organizational inter-group conflict theory also emphasizes the teams or department's role and function with conflicting goals or competition for limited resources.

While the causes are adequately researched, the associated bullying behaviour, emotions, and resolution strategies are less understood in highly structured, large manufacturing organizations with established systems and processes. Here, a perceived competition for limited resources among groups is low. This research comprehensively looks for various associated factors of conflict and extends associated theories.

Objective and Methodology

The literature review indicated that conflict sources, bullying behaviour, emotional outcomes, and conflict resolution styles have not been investigated among departments or business functions. Secondly, the influence of age, experience, or management level has not been studied in Indian public sector manufacturing organizations. Hence, these points have been taken to be the broad objectives of this research. In the context of an organization, the study assumes no strong correlation among factors or significant differences among groups by departments or management levels.

The data collection and analysis for this study were conducted during May – September 2019. Convenient sampling technique was chosen where respondents belonging to the Executive cadre of the plant participated as respondents. The sample size calculated as per the 5-point Likert scale (standard deviation = 1.25, and an acceptable margin of error 5%) and the population of 2000 was 96 (Bartlett, Kotrlik, & Higgins, 2001).

There was a reluctance to fill up the questionnaire among the participants. Of the 150 approached, 50 refused, and 82 filled up questionnaires could be collected. This survey conforms to the acceptable response rates of 50 – 70% for survey studies (Morton, Bandara, Robinson, & Carr, 2012 ; Nulty, 2008). After rejecting the partially filled questionnaire, 78 responses were found suitable for final analysis. The size corresponds to an acceptable margin of error below 6%.

Instrument Design

A validated instrument was used (Ayoko et al., 2003 ; González-Navarro, Llinares-Insa, Zurriaga-Llorens, & Lloret-Segura, 2017) for the constructs. Three statements : Conflict of ideas in a workgroup, frequency of disagreements about project's task, and how often conflicting opinions about the work were used for task conflict. The process conflict factor included three statements : How often there is disagreement about who should do what, how much conflict on task responsibility, and the disagreement about resource allocation in the workgroup. Similarly, the relationship factors included how much relationship tension was present in the workgroup, how often people got angry while working, and how much emotional conflict existed in the workgroup.

Fourteen statements used to find prevalent bullying behaviour included being ignored, withholding information, unrealistic targets, belittling remarks, feeling threatened, criticism by others, too much monitoring, feeling of being cut-off, being shouted at, being humiliated, fear of taking sick leave, a malicious rumour being spread, verbal threat, and physical threat.

The conflict's emotional outcome was recorded with 10 variables as stress, anger, confusion, powerlessness, depression, feeling of being undermined, sadness, feeling isolated, humiliation, and fear. The conflict resolution styles included eight variables as withdraw, resign, appease, diffuse, confront, arbitrate, compromise, and negotiate.

Cronbach's reliability scores were computed for conflict sources (.771, 9 items), bullying behaviour (.885, 14 items), emotional outcomes (.852, 10 items), and conflict response style (.703, 8 items), which indicated reasonable reliability of the constructs and overall consistency of the scales used.

Data Analysis and Results

The sample consisted of 76 male and 2 female respondents. Of the total sample, 51% were graduate or post-graduate engineers, 22% were MBAs, 12% were chartered or cost accountants, 5% were master's in computer applications, 4% were bachelor's in science, 3% were diploma engineers, and 4% were arts graduates.

Respondents belonged to different departments: materials management, R&D, personnel, finance and accounts, cold rolling mill, electrical resistance welding pipe plant, town planning, public relations, ore bedding and blending plant, traffic and raw material, blast furnace, air conditioning, coke oven, transport, steel melting shop, EDP, plate mill, stores, mechanical shop, human resource development centre, law, and protocol departments. Employees could be re-grouped as engineering (50%), finance and accounts (11.5%), HR and personnel (21.8%), and research and development department (16.7%).

Respondents' designations included Assistant General Manager (19), Junior Manager (17), Assistant Manager (11), Senior Manager (11), Deputy General Manager (9), Manager (4), Deputy Manager (3), General Manager (1), Management trainee (1), SR (FA) (1), and Welfare executive (1). In general, the promotion from one level to another takes about 4 – 5 years.

The mean of experience was 18.9 years, and the standard deviation was 7.9 years. All the respondents were permanent employees of the organization. Tabulated values for different constructs are presented in this section.

Table 1 indicates a higher level of task conflict (idea conflict, frequency of disagreement, and conflicting opinions). There was minimal process conflict concerning who should do what, task responsibility, and resource allocation. There is a vague relationship between tension and emotional conflict ; however, respondents indicated that people often got angry while working (Mode = 4).

The mode and average values (Table 2) indicate low levels of bullying behaviour reported by the respondents. However, a few behaviours like being ignored, withholding information, unrealistic targets, belittling remarks, criticism, too much monitoring, and being shouted at were more exhibited compared to other behaviours.

Table 3 indicates that on an average, the employees had a higher level of stress. The average level for anger is at 3, but if mode value is considered, respondents indicated a higher level of anger as well. Respondents indicated a lack of other feelings due to conflict.

The average values of the resolution style in Table 4 indicate that confronting and negotiating were major resolution styles among respondent executives in this study. There is ambivalence about diffusing, arbitration, and compromise as resolution styles. Withdrawing, resigning, and appeasing do not seem to be preferred conflict resolution methods among respondents.

Table 1. Distribution of Responses on Conflict Sources

	Task Conflict			Process Conflict			Relationship Conflict		
Response	**1**	**2**	**3**	**1**	**2**	**3**	**1**	**2**	**3**
1	7 (9)	13 (17)	14 (18)	22 (28)	19 (24)	22 (28)	15 (19)	20 (26)	30 (38)
2	25 (32)	20 (26)	17 (22)	11 (14)	22 (28)	16 (21)	26 (33)	16 (21)	17 (22)
3	9 (12)	17 (22)	11 (14)	10 (13)	9 (12)	4 (5)	10 (13)	8 (10)	7 (9)
4	28 (36)	20 (26)	23 (29)	17 (22)	11 (14)	17 (22)	18 (23)	20 (26)	6 (8)
5	9 (12)	8 (10)	13 (17)	18 (23)	17 (22)	19 (24)	9 (12)	14 (18)	18 (23)
Average	3.1	2.9	3.1	3.0	2.8	2.9	2.7	2.9	2.6
Mode	4.0	4.0	4.0	1.0	2.0	1.0	2.0	4.0	1.0

Note. Numbers in parentheses indicate percentage.

Table 2. ***Distribution of Responses to Bullying Behaviour***

Response	*F1*	*F2*	*F3*	*F4*	*F5*	*F6*	*F7*	*F8*	*F9*	*F10*	*F11*	*F12*	*F13*	*F14*
1	29	26	24	26	41	30	28	36	33	40	36	45	45	45
	(37)	(33)	(31)	(33)	(53)	(38)	(36)	(46)	(42)	(51)	(46)	(58)	(58)	(58)
2	12	15	15	17	14	13	15	15	10	10	13	10	8	15
	(15)	(19)	(19)	(22)	(18)	(17)	(19)	(19)	(13)	(13)	(17)	(13)	(10)	(19)
3	5	7	12	3	6	14	14	9	10	6	5	5	5	2
	(6)	(9)	(15)	(4)	(8)	(18)	(18)	(12)	(13)	(8)	(6)	(6)	(6)	(3)
4	25	12	13	17	7	9	13	13	15	12	10	6	10	7
	(32)	(15)	(17)	(22)	(9)	(12)	(17)	(17)	(19)	(15)	(13)	(8)	(13)	(9)
5	7	18	14	15	10	12	8	5	10	10	14	12	10	9
	(9)	(23)	(18)	(19)	(13)	(15)	(10)	(6)	(13)	(13)	(18)	(15)	(13)	(12)
Average	2.6	2.8	2.7	2.7	2.1	2.5	2.5	2.2	2.5	2.3	2.4	2.1	2.1	2.0
Mode	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0

Note. Numbers in parentheses indicate percentage.

F1- Ignored ; *F2* - Withhold information ; *F3* - Unrealistic targets ; *F4* - Belittling remarks ; *F5* - Feel threatened ; *F6* - Criticised ; *F7* - Much monitoring ; *F8* - Being cut-off ; *F9* - Being shouted ; *F10* - Humiliated ; *F11* - Afraid to take sick leave ; *F12* - Malicious rumour ; *F13* - Verbal threat ; *F14* - physical threats.

Table 3. ***Distribution of Responses on Emotional Outcomes of Conflict***

Responses	Factors									
	O1	*O2*	*O3*	*O4*	*O5*	*O6*	*O7*	*O8*	*O9*	*O10*
1	11 (14)	18 (23)	32 (41)	34 (44)	32 (41)	31 (40)	34 (44)	33 (42)	39 (50)	35 (45)
2	9 (12)	11 (14)	18 (23)	14 (18)	14 (18)	11 (14)	14 (18)	17 (22)	14 (18)	12 (15)
3	2 (3)	7 (9)	3 (4)	16 (21)	11 (14)	12 (15)	7 (9)	7 (9)	5 (6)	9 (12)
4	19 (24)	14 (18)	9 (12)	7 (9)	11 (14)	15 (19)	13 (17)	12 (15)	12 (15)	6 (8)
5	37 (47)	28 (36)	16 (21)	7 (9)	10 (13)	9 (12)	10 (13)	9 (12)	8 (10)	16 (21)
Average	3.8	3.3	2.5	2.2	2.4	2.5	2.4	2.3	2.2	2.4

Note. Numbers in parentheses indicate percentage.

O1- Stress ; *O2* - Anger ; *O3* - Confusion ; *O4* - Powerlessness ; *O5* - Depression ; *O6* - Undermined ; *O7* - Sadness ; *O8* - Feeling isolated, *O9* - Humiliation ; *O10* - Fearful.

Table 4. ***Distribution of Responses on Conflict Resolution Styles***

Responses	*R1*	*R2*	*R3*	*R4*	*R5*	*R6*	*R7*	*R8*
1	22 (28)	33 (42)	21 (27)	22 (28)	16 (21)	21 (27)	14 (18)	15 (19)
2	21 (27)	15 (19)	18 (23)	15 (19)	13 (17)	14 (18)	19 (24)	22 (28)
3	7 (9)	13 (17)	18 (23)	11 (14)	12 (15)	7 (9)	14 (18)	3 (4)
4	20 (26)	14 (18)	10 (13)	12 (15)	18 (23)	18 (23)	16 (21)	16 (21)
5	8 (10)	3 (4)	11 (14)	18 (23)	19 (24)	18 (23)	15 (19)	22 (28)
Average	2.6	2.2	2.6	2.9	3.1	3.0	3.0	3.1

Note. Numbers in parentheses indicate percentage.

R1 - Withdraw ; *R2* - Resign ; *R3* - Appease ; *R4* - Diffuse ; *R5* - Confront ; *R6* - Arbitrate ; *R7* - Compromise ; *R8* - Negotiate.

Correlation Analysis

The correlation is calculated for the sum score of responses on different constructs. The primary question was whether different sources of conflict are related to each other. Secondly, do such sources of conflict have any relation to the bullying behaviour, emotions, and conflict response styles. Table 5 lists the correlation values.

Table 5 indicates that the age and years of experience are not significantly related to conflict sources, bullying behaviours, emotional outcomes, or resolution styles. Other terms are significantly correlated with each other, except age and experience, and the correlation coefficients are high (>.3). Thus, the task as the source of conflict is related to the process and relationship conflicts, though, the correlation between task and relationship is less compared than the correlation between task and process.

Table 5. ***Correlation Among Factors***

	Total Score							
	Age	**Years' Experience**	**Task**	**Process**	**Relation**	**Bullying**	**Emotions**	**Conflict Response**
	(A)	***(B)***	***(C)***	***(D)***	***(E)***	***(F)***	***(G)***	***(H)***
(A)	1	.698**	.146	.126	.059	.098	.027	.155
		(.000)	(.201)	(.273)	(.605)	(.394)	(.814)	(.175)
(B)	.698**	1	.033	–.011	–.081	–.050	–.103	.091
	(.000)		(.777)	(.923)	(.482)	(.666)	(.372)	(.430)
(C)	.146	.033	1	.537**	.383**	.536**	.513**	.550**
	(.201)	(.777)		(.000)	(.001)	(.000)	(.000)	(.000)
(D)	.126	–.011	.537**	1	.481**	.662**	.565**	.639**
	(.273)	(.923)	(.000)		(.000)	(.000)	(.000)	(.000)
(E)	.059	–.081	.383**	.481**	1	.606**	.579**	.646**
	(.605)	(.482)	(.001)	(.000)		(.000)	(.000)	(.000)
(F)	.098	–.050	.536**	.662**	.606**	1	.751**	.695**
	(.394)	(.666)	(.000)	(.000)	(.000)		(.000)	(.000)
(G)	.027	–.103	.513**	.565**	.579**	.751**	1	.699**
	(.814)	(.372)	(.000)	(.000)	(.000)	(.000)		(.000)
(H)	.155	.091	.550**	.639**	.646**	.695**	.699**	1
	(.175)	(.430)	(.000)	(.000)	(.000)	(.000)	(.000)	

Note. * represents significant correlations $p<.05$, ** represents significant correlations $p<.01$.

Bullying behaviour is very strongly correlated with emotions and also to the conflict resolution type. Similarly, bullying behaviour relates to the process, relation, and task in the decreasing order of magnitude, which indicates process as the major influencer.

The correlation coefficient indicates that the conflict response style is majorly influenced by emotions, bullying behaviour, relationship conflict, process conflict, and task conflict in the decreasing order. Age and experience indicate a very low, negative, but insignificant coefficient of correlation. High Pearson's coefficient of correlation values for the sum score of variables suggest their variations to be similar across departments.

The null hypotheses consider the mean values of conflict variables in the study to have no variation among

departments. The alternate hypotheses for the departments consider significant variation in the mean values. Specific alternate hypotheses are :

- **H0C1 :** The mean of extent of conflict of ideas varies significantly among departments.
- **H0C2 :** There is significant variation in the mean of frequency of disagreements.
- **H0C3 :** The extent of group conflict about work varies significantly among departments.
- **H0C4 :** There is significant difference in the disagreements about who should do what.
- **H0C5 :** The conflict on task responsibilities varies significantly across departments.
- **H0C6 :** The mean of disagreement about resource allocation varies significantly.
- **H0C7 :** There is significant difference in the mean of the degree of relationship tension.
- **H0C8 :** The mean of 'frequency of people getting angry' varies significantly.
- **H0C9 :** There is significant difference between mean values of 'extent of emotional conflict.'

Table 6 presents ANOVA results for each of the variables across four major departments such as 1-Engineering, 2-Finance, 3-HR, and 4-R&D. The significant items ($p < .05$) are tabulated in Table 6.

Table 6 indicates that the following alternate hypotheses are accepted, indicating significant differences among departments: the extent of conflict of ideas (H0C1), the frequency of disagreement (H0C2), the conflict on

Table 6. ***Differences in Conflict Variables Among Departments***

Conflict Type	Dept.	*N*	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	Groups	Sum of Squares	Mean Square	*F*	Sig.
Idea	1.00	40	3.2	1.3	0.2	Between	11.9	4.0	2.8	0.045
	2.00	8	3.8	1.2	0.4	Within	104.4	1.4		
	3.00	17	3.2	1.2	0.3					
	4.00	13	2.3	0.9	0.3					
Frequency	1.00	40	2.9	1.2	0.2	Between	17.3	5.8	4.0	0.010
	2.00	8	4.0	1.3	0.5	Within	105.4	1.4		
	3.00	17	2.2	1.1	0.3					
	4.00	13	3.0	1.4	0.4					
Responsibility	1.00	40	3.1	1.5	0.2	Between	21.2	7.1	3.4	0.022
	2.00	8	3.5	1.7	0.6	Within	153.0	2.1		
	3.00	17	2.6	1.4	0.3					
	4.00	13	1.8	0.8	0.2					
Resource Allocation	1.00	40	3.1	1.6	0.3	Between	23.3	7.8	3.3	0.025
	2.00	8	4.3	0.7	0.3	Within	173.4	2.3		
	3.00	17	2.4	1.7	0.4					
	4.00	13	2.5	1.3	0.4					
Emotional Conflict	1.00	40	3.0	1.7	0.3	Between	20.0	6.7	2.8	0.049
	2.00	8	1.9	1.5	0.5	Within	179.3	2.4		
	3.00	17	2.4	1.7	0.4					
	4.00	13	1.8	0.8	0.2					

task responsibility (H0C5), the disagreement about resource allocation (H0C6), and the extent of emotional conflict (H0C9).

The finance department shows the highest mean for conflict of ideas, frequency, responsibility, resource allocation, and sum score of sources of conflict values are significantly different among groups.

The null hypotheses related to bullying behaviour consider that the mean of the values does not vary significantly across departments. The alternate hypotheses consider the mean values to be significantly different among departments. The alternate hypotheses are :

- **H0B1 :** Ignoring as a bullying practice varies significantly among departments.
- **H0B2 :** The practice of withholding information varies significantly among departments.
- **H0B3 :** Employees get significantly different unrealistic target among departments.
- **H0B4 :** Employees of different departments significantly differ in the practice of belittling.
- **H0B5 :** Threatening as a bullying practice differs significantly among departments.
- **H0B6 :** There is significant difference among departments on the tendency to criticise.
- **H0B7 :** Excessive monitoring as a bullying practice differs significantly among departments.
- **H0B8 :** The mean of cut-off behaviour varies significantly among departments.
- **H0B9 :** The bullying practice of 'shouting' varies significantly across departments.
- **H0B10 :** The behaviour of humiliating co-workers varies significantly among departments.
- **H0B11 :** Different departments differ in their behaviour of giving sick-leave.
- **H0B12 :** Spreading of rumour as a bullying behaviour significantly differs among departments.
- **H0B13 :** The practice of giving verbal threats differs significantly among departments.
- **H0B14 :** The practice of giving physical threats varies significantly among departments.

Table 7 indicates that the following alternate hypotheses are accepted, indicating significant differences among departments: Ignoring (H0B1), withholding information (H0B2), giving unrealistic targets (H0B3), belittling (H0B4), tendency to criticise (H0B6), excessive monitoring (H0B7), cut-off (H0B8), shouting (H0B9), and humiliating (H0B10).

The study finds that being ignored was significantly high ($F = 6.3$ and $p < .01$) in the engineering and finance departments compared to HR and R&D departments. Similarly, the finance department was significantly more likely to withhold information compared to other departments ($M = 4.1$), which is significant ($F = 4.4$, $p < .01$). Executives in the finance department were significantly more likely to be given unrealistic targets ($M = 3.9$, $F = 4.4$, $p < .01$). Being belittled as a bullying tactic was used by both the finance and engineering departments ($M = 3.1$), which is significantly different ($F = 3.8$, $p < .05$) from R&D and HR departments. The finance department personnel were more likely to be criticised ($M = 3.3$, $F = 3.5$, $p < .05$) and monitored excessively ($M = 3.0$, $F = 4.7$, $p < .01$) compared to other departments. Being cut-off ($M = 2.6$, $F = 3.6$, $p < .05$), shouted at ($M = 3.0$, $F = 4.9$, $p < .01$), or humiliated ($M = 2.8$, $F = 3.9$, $p < .05$) were more likely bullying tactics used by the engineering department than the other departments. Overall, the engineering department was more likely to display bullying behaviour than the other departments (Mean sum score bullying = 37.9, $F = 7.4$, $p < .01$).

Table 7. ***Variation in Bullying Behaviour Among Departments***

	Dept	*N*	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	Groups	Sum of Squares	Mean Square	*F*	Sig.
Ignored	1.00	40	3.0	1.4	0.2	Between	34.1	11.4	6.3	0.001
	2.00	8	3.0	1.2	0.4	Within	134.5	1.8		
	3.00	17	2.6	1.6	0.4					
	4.00	13	1.2	0.6	0.2					
Withheld	1.00	40	2.9	1.5	0.2	Between	30.2	10.1	4.4	0.006
Information	2.00	8	4.1	1.5	0.5	Within	168.2	2.3		
	3.00	17	2.5	1.7	0.4					
	4.00	13	1.8	1.2	0.3					
Unrealistic	1.00	40	2.9	1.5	0.2	Between	26.3	8.8	4.4	0.007
Targets	2.00	8	3.9	1.4	0.5	Within	147.5	2.0		
	3.00	17	2.5	1.6	0.4					
	4.00	13	1.7	0.8	0.2					
Belittled	1.00	40	3.1	1.6	0.3	Between	25.4	8.5	3.8	0.014
	2.00	8	3.1	1.8	0.6	Within	166.4	2.2		
	3.00	17	2.4	1.5	0.4					
	4.00	13	1.6	1.0	0.3					
Criticised	1.00	40	2.7	1.5	0.2	Between	20.9	7.0	3.5	0.020
	2.00	8	3.3	1.0	0.4	Within	148.6	2.0		
	3.00	17	2.4	1.7	0.4					
	4.00	13	1.5	0.7	0.2					
Excessive	1.00	40	2.9	1.4	0.2	Between	23.8	7.9	4.7	0.005
Monitoring	2.00	8	3.0	1.6	0.6	Within	125.6	1.7		
	3.00	17	1.8	1.1	0.3					
	4.00	13	1.7	0.8	0.2					
Cut-off	1.00	40	2.6	1.5	0.2	Between	17.8	5.9	3.6	0.017
	2.00	8	2.3	1.0	0.4	Within	121.7	1.6		
	3.00	17	2.0	1.3	0.3					
	4.00	13	1.2	0.4	0.1					
Shouted at	1.00	40	3.0	1.6	0.3	Between	28.8	9.6	4.9	0.004
	2.00	8	1.8	0.7	0.3	Within	146.6	2.0		
	3.00	17	2.4	1.5	0.4					
	4.00	13	1.5	0.8	0.2					
Humiliated	1.00	40	2.8	1.7	0.3	Between	24.4	8.1	3.9	0.012
	2.00	8	1.8	0.9	0.3	Within	154.5	2.1		
	3.00	17	1.9	1.3	0.3					
	4.00	13	1.4	0.9	0.2					

The null hypotheses in the study considered the mean of different emotions due to conflict situation to be the same among departments. The following alterative hypotheses are considered :

- **H0E1 :** Emotional stress significantly varies among departments.
- **H0E2 :** Feeling of anger varies significantly among departments.
- **H0E3 :** Feeling of confusion differs significantly in different departments.
- **H0E4 :** The employees of different departments significantly differ in their feeling of powerlessness.
- **H0E5 :** The feeling of depression varies significantly among departments.
- **H0E6 :** 'Feeling undermined' among employees of different departments varies significantly.
- **H0E7 :** Feeling sad varies significantly among different departments.
- **H0E8 :** Feeling isolated varies significantly among employees of different department.
- **H0E9 :** The feeling of humiliation differs significantly among departments.
- **H0E10 :** Employees of different departments significantly differ in feeling fearful.

Table 8 indicates that only three alternate hypotheses, such as the emotional stress (H0E1), the feeling of anger (H0E2), and the feeling of confusion (H0E3) vary significantly different among departments.

A significantly higher level of stress ($M = 4.5, F = 5.3, p < .01$) and emotional confusion ($M = 4.1, F = 4.2, p < .01$) were exhibited from the responses of the finance department compared to other departments. However, the score for anger is marginally higher for the engineering department ($M = 3.7$) than the finance department ($M = 3.6$) ; these scores are significantly different from the other departments ($F = 3.0, p < .05$).

The null hypotheses of this study considered the mean of the conflict resolution methods not to vary across departments. The following alternate hypotheses are considered :

- **H0R1 :** Withdrawal as a conflict resolution method varies significantly among departments.
- **H0R2 :** Resigning to conflict varies significantly among different departments.

Table 8. ***Variation in Emotional Feelings Due to Conflict Among Departments***

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	Groups	Sum of Squares	Mean Square	*F*	Sig.
Stress	1.00	40	4.2	1.3	0.2	Between	30.3	10.1	5.3	0.002
	2.00	8	4.5	0.8	0.3	Within	140.4	1.9		
	3.00	17	3.6	1.8	0.4					
	4.00	13	2.5	1.3	0.4					
Anger	1.00	40	3.7	1.5	0.2	Between	22.2	7.4	3.0	0.034
	2.00	8	3.6	1.8	0.6	Within	180.0	2.4		
	3.00	17	2.9	1.9	0.5					
	4.00	13	2.3	1.1	0.3					
Confusion	1.00	40	2.5	1.7	0.3	Between	28.7	9.6	4.2	0.008
	2.00	8	4.1	1.1	0.4	Within	168.7	2.3		
	3.00	17	2.1	1.4	0.3					
	4.00	13	1.9	1.1	0.3					

Table 9. ***Variation in Conflict Resolution Methods Among Departments (ANOVA)***

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	Groups	Sum of Squares	Mean Square	*F*	Sig.
Confront	1.00	40	3.5	1.4	0.2	Between	20.1	6.7	3.3	0.024
	2.00	8	3.5	1.4	0.5	Within	149.3	2.0		
	3.00	17	2.8	1.6	0.4					
	4.00	13	2.2	1.1	0.3					

- **H0R3 :** Different departments significantly differ in their behaviour to appease in a conflict.
- **H0R4 :** Different departments significantly differ in their behaviour to diffuse in a conflict.
- **H0R5 :** Confrontation behaviour varies significantly among departments in response to conflict.
- **H0R6 :** The behaviour to complain varies significantly among different departments.
- **H0R7 :** Tendency to compromise in a conflict differs significantly among different departments.
- **H0R8 :** The negotiation behaviour varies significantly among different departments.

The results of ANOVA test are depicted in Table 9. The confrontation behaviour as a response to conflict (H0R5) is significantly different among departments (alternate hypothesis accepted). Table 9 indicates that the engineering and finance departments ($M = 3.5, F = 3.3, p < .05$) use significantly higher levels of confrontation as a conflict resolution style.

Variation of Conflict-Related Processes by Management Level

The same set of null and alternate hypotheses indicated in the earlier section are tested (ANOVA) for variation by management levels (junior, middle, and senior). The first group consisted of designations up to Deputy Managers, the second group consisted of Managers to Senior Managers, and the third group consisted of Assistant General Managers and above. The significant variables ($p < .05$) are depicted in Table 10.

Different levels of management significantly differ on conflict due to task responsibilities. The alterative hypothesis (H0C5) is accepted in this case. The different levels of management also differ in various bullying behaviours and the following alternate hypotheses are accepted, indicating significant differences : Withhold information (H0B2), get unrealistic targets (H0B3), belittle (H0B4), criticise (H0B6), and excessive monitoring (H0B7). Stress varies significantly among different management levels and the alternate hypothesis (H0E1) is accepted. Interestingly, there are significant differences in confrontation as a conflict resolution mechanism among different management levels and the alternate hypothesis is accepted (H0R5).

Table 10 indicates that the middle and higher management were significantly likely to have a conflict on task responsibility (Middle and higher management $M = 3.2, F = 3.9, p < .05$). Higher management at the plant level was likely to have significantly more process conflicts ($M = 9.8, F = 4.5, p < .05$) than junior or middle-level managers.

The bullying behaviour ANOVA results are interesting to note. The middle-level managers felt that information was withheld ($M = 3.3, F = 4.1, p < .05$), they got unrealistic targets ($M = 3.4, F = 4.9, p < .01$), they were criticised ($M = 3.3, F = 5.1, p < .01$), and were excessively monitored ($M = 3.3, F = 4.2, p < 0.05$). However, for the feeling of being belittled, both the higher and middle management have the same score ($M = 3.1$), which is significantly different among groups ($F = 3.1, p <= .05$).

The higher management felt a significantly high-stress among the group (Mean = 4.0, $F = 5.8, p < .01$). The

Table 10. ***ANOVA of Conflict and Associated Processes by Designation***

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	Groups	Sum of Squares	Mean Square	*F*	Sig.
Responsibility	1.00	33	2.3	1.4	0.2	Between	16.4	8.2	3.9	0.025
	2.00	15	3.2	1.3	0.3	Within	157.7	2.1		
	3.00	30	3.2	1.6	0.3					
				Bullying Behaviour						
Withhold	1.00	33	2.2	1.4	0.3	Between	19.4	9.7	4.1	0.021
Information	2.00	15	3.3	1.4	0.4	Within	178.9	2.4		
	3.00	30	3.1	1.7	0.3					
Get Unrealistic	1.00	33	2.2	1.3	0.2	Between	20.0	10.0	4.9	0.010
Targets	2.00	15	3.4	1.2	0.3	Within	153.8	2.1		
	3.00	30	3.0	1.6	0.3					
Belittled	1.00	33	2.2	1.5	0.3	Between	14.7	7.3	3.1	0.050
	2.00	15	3.1	1.6	0.4	Within	177.1	2.4		
	3.00	30	3.1	1.6	0.3					
Criticised	1.00	33	1.9	1.3	0.2	Between	20.4	10.2	5.1	0.008
	2.00	15	3.3	1.5	0.4	Within	149.1	2.0		
	3.00	30	2.7	1.4	0.3					
Excess	1.00	33	2.1	1.2	0.2	Between	15.1	7.5	4.2	0.019
Monitored	2.00	15	3.3	1.4	0.4	Within	134.3	1.8		
	3.00	30	2.5	1.4	0.3					
				Emotion						
Stress	1.00	33	3.2	1.7	0.3	Between Groups	22.8	11.4	5.8	0.005
	2.00	15	4.0	1.2	0.3	Within	147.9	2.0		
	3.00	30	4.4	1.2	0.2					
				Conflict Resolution						
Confront	1.00	33	2.4	1.2	0.2	Between	35.7	17.8	10.0	0.000
	2.00	15	3.9	1.0	0.3	Within	133.8	1.8		
	3.00	30	3.6	1.5	0.3					

middle management group majorly took a confronting position in a conflict situation, which is highest among the group ($M = 3.9, F = 10.0, p < .01$).

Discussion and Conclusion

Across respondents, the task-related conflicts (Mode = 4) and getting angry while working (relationship conflict type 2) were high. Bullying behaviour factors were much less (Mode = 1). The average value indicates that stress was high (Mean = 4, Mode = 5). Similarly, the level of anger (Mode = 5) was high. Confrontation as a conflict resolution style (Mode = 4) was more prevalent. Age and experience do not indicate a significant correlation with other factors like conflict sources, bullying, emotions, or conflict resolution style.

The organization is not homogeneous since there were significant differences among departments concerning

different conflicts. The finance department had higher conflict of ideas, frequent disagreements about the tasks, task responsibility, and resource allocation conflicts. The engineering department had higher relationship type (emotional) conflicts.

The departments were also not homogenous in their bullying behaviour. Being ignored, withholding information, unrealistic targets, criticism, being monitored, and being shouted at are some of the behaviours that were exhibited more than the other behaviours. Other behaviours included feeling threatened, being cut-off, being humiliated, and spreading a rumour, afraid to take sick leave, and verbal or physical threats.

Stress and emotional conflict were significantly higher in the finance department ; whereas, anger was more in engineering departments. The engineering and finance departments used confrontation as a significantly higher conflict resolution strategy than the other departments. The finding is supported by a study on industries of Hong Kong, where 'confrontation' was found to be more commonly used to handle conflict (Cheung & Chuah, 1999).

There are also differences in conflict type, bullying behaviour, emotion, and conflict resolution strategies across management levels. Task responsibility conflict was more among middle and top management compared to the lower levels. Interestingly, the middle management level reported a higher level of being bullied, and they reported withholding of information, unrealistic targets, belittled, criticised, and monitored. A study indicates that older workers are more likely to be victimized by their superiors and colleagues (Einarsen & Skogstad, 1996). However, this study context was different and reported that middle managers are more likely to be bullied. Also, the context of the public sector unit where jobs are stable needs to be considered. Unwilling lower levels and pressurizing top levels might have contributed to such a feeling of being squeezed among middle-level managers.

However, the top management reported a higher level of stress. The middle management reported confrontation as the dominant conflict resolution strategy. Another research indicated that employees at the highest and lowest levels of organization do not generally compromise in a conflict (Thomas, Fann Thomas, & Schaubhut, 2008). This suggests the middle level to compromise, which is not substantiated in this study. Secondly, it is generally believed and reported that bullied employees report significantly more stress than non-bullied employees (Agervold & Mikkelsen, 2004). However, in this case, the top managers reported a higher level of stress.

Overall, this study indicates that there is a sub-organizational pattern to different aspects of conflicts and argues that conflict is better understood at the functional levels of an organization.

Theoretical and Managerial Implications

We extend the conflict theory-related literature by indicating that the conflict type and pattern of bullying behaviour has a significant relationship. This relationship varies across department or functions as well as levels of management. Interestingly, however, confrontation remains the predominant conflict resolution method. It can be argued that the role, interpersonal interactions, and expectations are typical to a department or a level of management. Secondly, this study indicates a perception of a persistent level of conflict rather than a specific instance of conflict. The nature of job or function may explain such a generalised perception of conflict, also, to an extent, by creating perceived resource scarcity. Information withholding as a bullying behaviour and its relationship with various conflicts indicates that employees treated information as a resource. Thus, information scarcity can be a cause of conflict. Different conflict types and bullying behaviours must be monitored to prevent adverse impact on the employees' emotional health. Secondly, the need for training to adopt various conflict resolution methods is apparent from this study.

Practical Implications

The study indicates substantial differences across the departments and management levels about the conflict

sources, bullying behaviours, emotion, and resolution mechanisms. Possible reasons are the nature of work, nature and size of the team, visibility of the task, and the impact of the decisions being taken. Thus, the organization and employees need to be aware of the specific nature of the conflict processes. Sensitization programs may reduce the adverse impact generated in the conflict process. For example, anger management during conflict becomes an important skill to be learned. The study also finds the middle-level managers to be subjected to a higher level of bullying behaviour. The impact could be ameliorated by periodic assessment and mitigation strategies.

Limitations of the Study and Scope for Further Research

Though the sample size is statistically valid, a larger sample size is desirable for each subgroup. Secondly, a comparative and qualitative study design can increase the robustness of the findings.

Competition for scarce resources, inter-personal behaviour, and conflicting goals can create a conflict. A plausible contrary argument that groups create such scarcity of resources or information to perpetuate conflict needs further investigation. The years of experience and age are not found to be significantly correlated with conflict causes, bullying behaviour, and resolution mechanism. This finding raises the question of appropriate training interventions and measures across functions and levels of organization to be investigated. An earlier study on gender role in professional–life conflict (PLC) indicated that gender influenced very few professional attributes, but there was a relationship between professional attributes and PLC (Kumari, 2020). A gendered perspective of organizational intergroup conflict may bring an additional perspective.

Authors' Contribution

Dr. Brajaballav Kar conceived the idea and developed the empirical study design. Subsequently, he supervised the data collection, analyzed the data, and prepared the initial and final draft. Aishwarya Tripathy collected the data, contributed to the literature review from specified articles, coded the data, and performed the initial data analysis. Later, she also reviewed the draft and suggested modifications. The data were analyzed in SPSS 24.0.

Conflict of Interest

The authors certify that they have no affiliations with or involvement in any organization or entity with any financial or non-financial interest in the subject matter or materials discussed in this manuscript.

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