

Full Length Research Paper

Intergroup conflict within a South African mining company

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The uncertainty that accompanies organizational change heightens prospects for intra-organizational conflict. Notwithstanding this, the knowledge base on the sources (or causes) of organizational conflict is underdeveloped – largely as a result of a low incidence of empirical research, and in particular in South Africa. The current study explored the perceived sources of intergroup conflict in a South African mining company. The aim of this research is to investigate intergroup conflict and to look into how intergroup conflict influences employment relations throughout all levels of the organization. From a probability population of 1000 in the twelve departments a random sample of 200 employees was chosen to participate in the research. This number represents 20% of the total population. Intergroup conflict was analysed and evaluated. Conclusions were drawn and recommendations made on the occurrence of intergroup conflict based on the findings of the literature and empirical study. Data frequencies, correlations and a correlation analysis were performed through the SPSS programme.

Key words: Conflict management, group dynamics, employment relations, intergroup relations, employment relations wellness.

INTRODUCTION

Major change and continued turbulence in the social, political, technological and economic environments at a global level as well as locally in South Africa, are creating an uncertain and complex environment in which organizations have to operate. Fuelled predominantly by rapid advances in the information and communications technology (ICT) sector, globalism has become both a cause and a consequence of sustained change (Van Tonder, 2008), which, by all accounts, appear to be increasing in magnitude and pace (Burnes, 2003; Schabracq and Cooper, 2000; Vakola, Tsaousis and Nikolaou, 2004; Van Tonder, 2007a, 2007b).

Conflict is an unavoidable aspect of organisational life. Major trends such as constant change, employee diversity, bigger teams, lesser face-to-face communication and globalisation have made organisational conflict inevitable (Kreitner and Kinicki, 2008).

Furthermore, Marx (1965), Dahrendorf (1965), Deutsch

and Coleman (2000) as well as Anstey (1999) all indicate that poverty, power, social mobility, unemployment, competition and class consciousness are potential sources of conflict. It is clear that most of the researchers of conflict have identified more or less the same causes of conflict. As in war, groups in organisations can also be in conflict with each other. In 1967, the Arab Israeli war took place, and the battle for power was the main source of conflict. In organisations, a battle for power is also evident. Conflict occurs between groups and before these conflicts can be resolved the cause must firstly be identified (Forsyth, 2005). If managements want to thoroughly understand conflict and handle it efficiently, managers firstly need to understand the sources of conflict (Nelson and Quick, 2006).

In this regard Holtzhausen (1994) has argued that organizational conflict can be resolved if the causes are identified and solutions are found which accommodate all the parties involved. Indeed, attempting to deal with and / or manage conflict successfully without identifying the causes of such conflict is a lost cause (Havenga, 2004). With conflict a pervasive phenomenon in organizations, effective management that is, dealing with conflict in such

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a way that it does not recur, is clearly needed. In this regard the management of the origin (or sources) appears to be key to the effective resolution of the conflict. With regard to the causes of conflict it is useful to note that the causes (sources) and "conditions" of conflict can be linked and collectively regarded as prerequisites for conflict (Jordaan, 1993: 25-45). Closer scrutiny of relevant terminology reveals that several authors in fact equate sources of conflict to prerequisites or causes of conflict (Marx, 1965; Dahrendorf, 1976, 1990; Robbins, 2009).

Marx (1965) and Dahrendorf (1976) specifically emphasize *freehold* (poverty rights), *poverty*, *socialmobility*, *absence of security*, *unemployment*, competition and *class consciousness* as causes of conflict. Some of these sources were implicitly identified by the authors as forming an integral part of the structure of society. Scholars in the domains of sociology, industrial sociology, behaviorism, and management science have since incorporated these causes, in one way or another, in their typologies of the causes of conflict (Ashley and Orenstein, 1985; Lopreato and Hazelrigg, 1972; Deutsch and Coleman, 2000; Ritzer, 1992; Turner, 1991). Most of these scholars, however, approached conflict and its causes from a macro economics and political perspective and paid very little attention, if any, to conflict as experienced at the level of the individual organization or business, whether small, medium or large.

Increasing uncertainty and complexity in the operating environment of organizations provide fertile ground for the onset of conflict in the workplace (in the vernacular *conflict* is typically viewed as a form of disagreement or argument, or an incompatibility in the views, opinions, principles and so forth of two or more individuals (Dictionary Unit, 2002). Indeed, an increase in the incidence of conflict is to be expected (De Dreu et al., 2002). Given these considerations a strong case can be argued for a heightened probability of conflict in both public and private sector organizations in South Africa on grounds of the influence of, among other, organizational change, affirmative action programmes, competition for scarce resources and regular changes in management. In the South African context, however, limited empirical information is available on local authorities' and private sector businesses' awareness and understanding of conflict, their perception of the causes or sources thereof, and how conflict should be managed. In this regard Holtzhausen (1994) has argued that organizational conflict can be resolved if the causes are identified and solutions are found which accommodate all the parties involved. Indeed, attempting to deal with and / or manage conflict successfully without identifying the causes of such conflict is detrimental to organizational coherence (Havenga, 2004).

Effective managers/leaders know when to stir 'positive-conflict' for the benefit of the organization and when to suppress negative-conflict. With conflict a pervasive phenomenon in organizations, effective management that

is, dealing with negative-conflict in such a way that it does not recur, is clearly needed. In this regard the management of the origin (or sources) appears to be key to the effective resolution of the conflict. This, in turn, presupposes that managers have a clear understanding of the many sources of conflict in organizational settings (Nelson and Quick, 2001: 24).

One can clearly conclude that researchers such as Belak (2008) and Brown (2004) share the common idea that intergroup conflict must first be identified before it can be solved. The difficult part is understanding how intergroup conflict manifests and changes in the organisation. If management can identify the sources of the conflict and understand the conflict, solutions and remedies for the problem can be found.

Such a study of intergroup conflict is very important for the employment relationship. It is clear that intergroup conflict can have dire consequences for the organisation. Intergroup conflict's sources, antecedents and consequences must be identified in order to find a remedy to resolve it. Management must understand intergroup conflict in order to find positive outcomes. Robbins (2009) argues that intergroup conflict occurs in most organisations and dysfunctional conflict can severely disrupt the operations of any organisation.

Brown (2004) argues that organisational life is changing so drastically, and with this change, intergroup conflict is becoming increasingly evident in organisations. If this conflict manifests in dysfunctional intergroup conflict the outcomes or consequences can be disastrous, as mentioned earlier. Brown mentions that intergroup conflict can also hamper healthy intergroup and employment relations. Fiske (2002) indicates that bias, including stereotyping, can create a breakdown of healthy employment relations in the organisation. Moreover et al. (2000) indicate that it is important for an organisation to create and stimulate harmonious intergroup and employment relations.

Robbins (2009), Kreitner and Kinicki (2008), Brown (2004), Belak (2008) and Muzafer (1966) all indicate that intergroup conflict exists in most organisations. From this evidence and research, the assumption in this study is that intergroup conflict exists in this company. If the empirical study proves that intergroup conflict does not exist, it will be an indication that this company has perfect leadership, conflict resolution mechanisms and good employee relations. For purposes of this study, it is important to note that people who experience intergroup conflict may not be of the same workgroup, but can have the same intergroup conflict experience.

THE SOUTH AFRICAN MINING SECTOR

As the study was conducted in a mining-company it is important to bring this sector into context. Mining in South Africa has been the main driving force behind the history and development of Africa's most advanced and richest

economy. Factors like proposed nationalization, legislation, environmental concerns, and illegal miners all impact on the sustainability of these mines and the security it provides to the workers.

The added stress of safety underground and relative low wages could hold the potential to further lead to demotivation and subsequent disengagement of the workforce. Surface workers on South African mines earn roughly R1 500 (US\$200) per month, while underground workers earn R3 000 (US\$400) per month, figures which have not changed much since 2005.

Due to these challenges unions like the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM), which is the largest recognised collective bargaining agent representing workers in the Mining, plays a pivotal role in conflict and dispute resolution in this sector. But an understanding of the causes of conflict is necessary to effectively institutionalize resolution tactics to ensure the continued relationship between the various groups within this industry (Department of Mining, <http://www.bullion.org.za/Publications/Facts and Figures2006/F and F2006.pdf>)

PROBLEM STATEMENT, AIM AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

From the fore-going the following problem statement is identified: Dysfunctional intergroup conflict resulting from certain sources impacts on the functioning of the mine in such a manner that it can severely hamper sound employment relationships.

The purpose of this paper is to approach the issue of conflict, do an exploratory investigation into intergroup conflict and to look into how intergroup conflict influences sound employment relations within the organization.

The paper intends to answer the following research questions:

- 1) What is intergroup conflict and how does it manifest in the workplace, specifically in relation to the mining-sector?
- 2) How do the respondents experience intergroup conflict in their work-environment?
- 3) What are the sources and antecedents of intergroup conflict?
- 4) Is there a correlation between the experience of intergroup conflict and employment relations wellness?

These research questions can only lead to specific answers referring to the selected organisation, and are not necessarily generalisable. However, they can serve as new stimuli in the discourse on the abovementioned topics.

Significance of the study

The contribution of this paper is toward increasing the

clarity and interdisciplinary understanding of the origins of conflict within this specific company, the experience of employees towards this conflict, as well as the impact it has on employment relations wellness. Recommendations will also be provided for managing organisational conflict,

INTERGROUP CONFLICT

Almost all theories that attempt to explain the sources or causes of conflict and the way in which conflict is, or should be managed, are supported by, or adjusted to, empirical studies (Havenga, 2002). There are many exponents of the conflict theory that had a significant impact on the theory of conflict and the view of conflict. Marx, Pareto, Dahrendorf, Weber, Davis, Comte and Durkheim made the most exceptional contributions towards the theory of conflict (Lopreato and Hazelrigg, 1972). The numerous social theories that emphasize social conflict have roots in the thoughts of Karl Marx (1818 to 1883), the great German theorist and political activist. Karl Marx was the father of communism and he was also the main exponent of the conflict theory (Marx, 1965).

Marx emphasised social struggle between classes and divided the groups into the bourgeoisie (owners) and proletariat (non-owners) (Havenga, 2004). The Marxist conflict approach stresses materialist explanation of history, a dialectical technique of analysis, a significant attitude concerning existing social measures, and a political agenda of revolution or, at least, reforming. Karl Marx saw the ownership and control of the powers of production as the most important social factors that enable one to understand the dynamics of the modern day societies (Visagie and Linde, 2006).

Dahrendorf (1965) states that the capitalist society lost all importance and was replaced by the new industrial society. Dahrendorf identifies a wide variety of groups in conflict. Two important aspects of conflict can be identified in his work.

- 1) The first main aspect is the importance of power and that conflict is unavoidable. Dahrendorf stresses the importance of power as well as the unavoidability of conflict.
- 2) Secondly, emphasis is placed on the determinants of active conflict and how it changes, manifests and develops in groups with conflicting goals (Visagie and Linde, 2006). Dahrendorf (1959: 165) notes that "the structural origin of such conflicts must be sought in the arrangement of social rules endowed with expectations of domination or subjection". The spread of power is the central focal point of social structures in society. Power, which is associated with a certain position, is the key viewpoint of Dahrendorf (Wallace and Wolf, 1995).

Concerning the work of Marx and Dahrendorf it can be said that they saw competition and power playing as

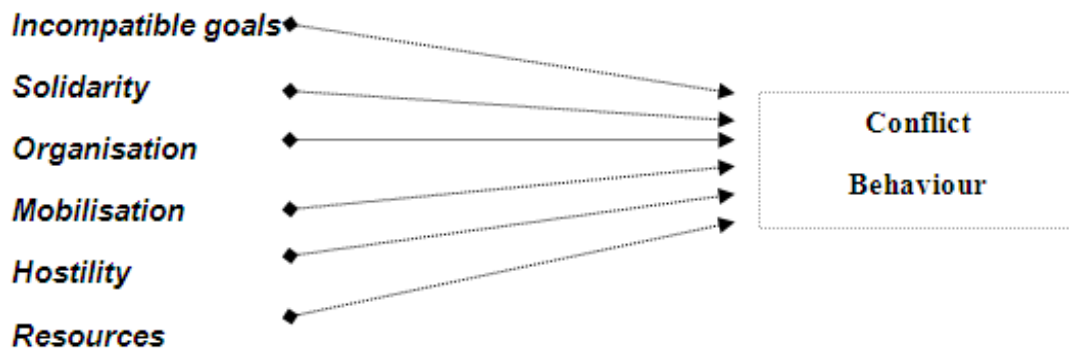


Figure 1. Theory of conflict behavior. (Source: Bartos and Wehr, 2002).

playing an important part in conflict. This can be directly linked with the realistic conflict theory which will subsequently be discussed. The realistic conflict theory will serve as the theory basis of the literature part of this study. Bartos and Wehr (2002) remark that it is important in the theories of conflict to look at the processes which lead to conflict, and also at certain conflict behaviours. Bartos and Wehr share the same opinion as Dahrendorf, Marx, Muzafer and Brown. All these researchers indicate that resources, incompatible goals and hostility towards other groups might lead to conflict and conflict behaviours. Bartos and Wehr indicate that there are several factors that will lead to a theory of conflict behaviour (Figure 1).

Nelson and Quick (2006) state that intergroup conflict occurs within trade unions, between two departments or between an employer and the government. This situation occurs when opposing groups are formed within a work situation and are unable to come to an agreement such as in organisations when different groups work in conflict with each other.

It appears that Marx's idea of conflict centers on the macro-world and not on the micro-world of the organisation. In analysing the conflict perspective and theory of Marx, it is clear that there is conflict between groups for different reasons. Marx identified private ownership as being the origin of conflict. Private ownership implies that two parties or classes are in conflict with each other, namely the bourgeoisie and the proletariat or the owners and non-owners. This can also apply to the organisation. There is conflict between the groups and one group may have more than the other, which will lead to conflict or intergroup conflict (Havenga, 2004).

The number and range of potential sources of conflict suggested by scholars are substantive, but most of these were theoretical conceptualizations with rigorous empirical research a rarity. The scientific legitimacy of these claimed sources of conflict as well as the categorization systems proposed; remain problematic in the absence of empirical research. This is particularly applicable to the South African environment where

empirical studies on the causes of organization-level conflict are not in evidence.

Probably one of the most important descriptions for intergroup conflict, the *realistic group conflict theory* implies that intergroup conflict arises from incompatible interests and goals between groups, with the incompatibility encouraged by scarcity of resources (Levine and Campbell, 2000). The realistic conflict theory views conflict between groups as generated by an interdependent competition for scarce resources (Hogg and Abrams, 1998). This theory argues that conflict between groups stems from competition for scarce resources, including food, territory, wealth, power, natural resources and energy. This theory and method regarding intergroup relations assumes that conflict between groups is coherently implying that groups have conflicting goals and compete for scarce resources (Brewer, 1979; LeVine and Campbell, 2000; Muzafer, 1966). The incompatibility of goals can lead to prejudice, reliance on stereotypes, bias and hostile behaviour among groups. This scarcity of resources can also transpire within an organisation (Galinsky, 2002).

When considering research beyond the South African setting, it is observed that the cause of conflict emphasized by scholars seldom pertinently addresses the organization or business level. Earlier and more recent accounts of these sources of conflict in many instances address the subject at the macro-structural rather than the micro- or business level, where these sources are typically interpreted as prerequisites for conflict to develop (Dahrendorf, 1976; Jordaan, 1993; Marx, 1965; Mayer, 2001; Robbins, 2009; Strohm, 2002). Those who do consider the causes of conflict at the organizational level surfaced a multitude of potential sources of conflict. Accordingly, such sources or causes include differences in knowledge, beliefs or basic values; competition for position, power or recognition; a need for tension release; a drive for autonomy; personal dislikes; and differing perceptions or attributes brought about by the organizational structure, different role structures. Also considered is the heterogeneity of the workforce, environmental changes, differences in goals, diverse

economic interests, loyalties of groups, and value discrepancies, which were all considered at various stages as major causes of conflict in organizations (Weider and Hatfield, 1995).

Havenga (2002) indicates that causes of conflict at the level of the organization could also include resource availability; affirmative action programs; the scope and content of workload; the introduction of new management techniques; and differences of a cultural and racial nature. A typology that further categorizes sources of conflict is offered by Nelson and Quick (2001) who differentiate between structural factors (causes) that is, those that develop from within the organization and originate from the manner in which work is organized, and secondly, personal factors, which emerge as a result of individual differences among employees.

Although the potential sources of conflict seemingly abound, the important role of communication as a potential source of conflict appears to be understated. With a few exceptions (Robbins, 2009; Vecchio, 2000) communication is infrequently considered as a source of conflict. The typologies utilized by these authors tend to suggest that the various sources of conflict can be classified into three categories namely communication processes, structure, and individual behavioural factors. However, despite the frequency with which causes (sources) of conflict are nominated or suggested, empirical support for the claimed validity of these causes or typologies are substantively lacking, which suggests that any and each categorization framework is as helpful or unhelpful as the next.

The impact and consequences of unattended conflict in the workplace on employees and the organization generally (Dijkstra, 2006), would argue for immediate attention to the resolution of the conflict rather than a careful and systematic (and invariably more time-intensive) approach to investigating the underlying causes of conflict. There is little to indicate that organizations actually attempt to establish the underlying causes of institutional conflict. Rather, and in order to resolve conflict, individuals or groups resort to conflict management instruments without first determining what the sources (causes) of conflict are - a key element in developing appropriate conflict resolution strategies (Havenga, 2004). Mayer (2001), for instance, argues that if the causes of conflict are known and understood, a conflict map can be developed, which could guide conflict resolution processes. Understanding the different forces that inform conflict behavior consequently empowers the facilitator or manager with the opportunity to develop a more selectively focused and nuanced approach for dealing with the specific occurrence of conflict.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

The preceding and somewhat reductionistic perspective on conflict belies the complexity that has gradually crept into definitions of conflict over time. These definitions invariably further differentiated

or accentuated different types of conflict for example intrapersonal, interpersonal, intra- and intergroup conflict, and organisational conflict (Rahim, 1986). Others have focused on the different dimensions on which conflict is partially or completely described, for example, the emotive and cognitive components of conflict (Schmidt and Kochan, 1972), while others accentuate the act of opposition, disagreement or argument (the action component) of conflict as emphasized in the Oxford definition. It is understandable that definitions will range from the inclusive to the exclusive and would reflect discipline-specific foci and variation.

Several considerations, however, have a bearing on the manner in which conflict is conceptualized and operationalised in this study. The paucity of empirical research in the South African context suggests an exploratory study which would constitute a first step towards more refined and focused research on the sources of organizational conflict. The current study consequently aims to empirically explore the causes or sources of conflict as perceived by employees of participating organizations.

Moreover, the adoption of a specific definition of conflict could impose unnecessary constraints on the operationalisation of the construct, especially if it is acknowledged that the average employee is bound to have an internalized, yet rudimentary concept of conflict - more in line with popular usage and definitions. Dijkstra (2006: 104-105) for example has proposed that the distinction between cognitive and affective conflict be abandoned on the grounds of the strong correlations observed in two independent studies (De Dreu and Weingart, 2003; Simons and Peterson, 2000) and the virtual impossibility of precisely separating out cognitive and affective dimensions in an assessment of workplace conflict. For the purpose of this study and drawing on definitional parameters utilized among other by Dijkstra (2006: 21), De Dreu et al. (1999), Schmidt and Kochan (1972), and Wall and Callister (1995), conflict is viewed as a dynamic process that commences with a perception of incompatibility of opinions, beliefs, principles, values, and perceptions between individuals and groups of varying sizes.

Research approach

A quantitative approach is followed in this exploratory study. The primary data is generated using a standardised instrument in a field survey design. This instrument developed by Rahim (1986) and known as the ROCII has been adjusted to suite the environmental circumstances of this study. Results were presented by means of descriptive group statistics and correlations.

Participants and sampling strategy

Practical considerations suggested a survey-based field study design. This entailed the development and administration of an experimental questionnaire that sampled employees' perceptions with regard to various causes (or sources) of organizational conflict and, secondly, employees' reported experience of the impact of institutional conflict. The methodological parameters of the study are briefly outlined in subsequent area. Stratified random sampling was used to identify the research group. The head of Human Resource (HR) of the mining organisation identified twelve departments in the mining company. The departments included the following: Human Resources, Mining, Geology, Environmental, Production, Financial, Engineering, Communication, Information Technology (IT), Construction, Seismic and Ventilation. From a possible population of 1000 in the twelve departments, 200 employees were sampled by random-sampling technique to participate in the research. This number represents 20% of the total population. 108 questionnaires were received back, which represents 54% of the selected research population. This is a

relatively good response, taking into consideration the nature of the respondents' work.

The HR manager indicated that some of the employees were hesitant to answer the questionnaires because of the nature of the conflict questionnaire, and some employees felt that their reputations and jobs were at stake. Every possible step was taken to ensure confidentiality and this was passed on to the respondents.

Measuring instrument

The measuring instrument is a questionnaire that evaluates intergroup conflict. The questionnaire consists of four sections. Section A consists of the biographical information of the respondents. Section B (factors contributing to conflict) consists of 10 questions, Section C (results of intergroup conflict) of 10 questions and Section D (employees own experience of intergroup conflict) of seven questions. Most of these questions were used in previous studies such as those of Cheung and Chuah (2002) and Havenga (2004). The questions also correlate with the objectives of the study.

Research procedure

With the assistance of an academic colleague in the strategic management field, the ROC-II questionnaires were personally distributed to the respondents. At the onset of distribution the /managers of the different sectors in the mines were briefed individually on the purpose, nature and expected duration for completing the questionnaire. Confidentiality and anonymity were also assured to participants. A period of two weeks was allowed for completion of the questionnaires. Collection of the questionnaires took place on the premises of the mine. Participants were then also given the opportunity to clarify any problems experienced with the questionnaire. A follow-up was done after an additional week to collect outstanding questionnaires not completed within the set time limit.

Statistical analysis

In this study, the statistical package for the social sciences (SPSS) programme (SPSS Incorporation, 2005) was used in order to find true, accurate, reliable and valid research results. The Cronbach-alpha coefficient, Phi coefficient, Cramer's V coefficient, descriptive statistics, correlations and frequency tables were used to retrieve valid and reliable data and information. The data were processed into percentages and frequency tables. The validity and reliability of the questionnaire were evaluated by experts and compared with the work of Havenga (2004) to measure the validity and reliability.

Reliability and validity

Reliability relates to the concept of a good quality research when reliability is a concept to evaluate quality in quantitative study with a "purpose of explaining", while the quality concept in qualitative study has the purpose of "generating understanding" (Stenbacka, 2001).

The difference in purposes of evaluating the quality of studies in quantitative and quantitative research is one of the reasons why the concept of reliability is irrelevant in qualitative research. Stenbacka (2001) points out that "the concept of reliability is even misleading

in qualitative research. If a qualitative study is discussed with reliability as a criterion, the consequence is rather that the study is no good". To ensure reliability in qualitative research, examination of trustworthiness is crucial while establishing good quality studies through reliability and validity in qualitative research (Patton, 2002).

The face-validity of this questionnaire has been evaluated by an expert in industrial relations in the mining industry and verified as reliable towards studying intergroup conflict in organisations. The conflict questionnaires of Havenga (2004) and Cheung and Chuah (2002) have been used as tools in developing this intergroup conflict questionnaire. The Phi, Cramer's V coefficients and Alpha Cronbach coefficients have been used to establish reliability in this study.

According to Patton (2002), the construct validity of a test is the extent to which a test measures what it is supposed to measure.

When evaluating conflict, it is difficult to find a usable criterion that can act as an independent and objective guideline (Havenga, 2004). Construct validity therefore is an alternative method that can be used to come to know more about the inherent attributes that explain the variance of the statements concerning the constructs of the questionnaires. Therefore reliability and validity, if they are to be relevant research concepts, particularly from a qualitative point of view, have to be redefined as we have seen in order to reflect the multiple ways of establishing truth (Patton, 2002).

INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS

Demographics of respondents

The 108 respondents consist of 74 (68.5%) male workers and 34 (31.5%) female workers (Table 1). From the 108 respondents, 0.9% (1) is under the age of 20 and 38.9% are between 21 and 35 years of age. 28.7% are between 36 and 45 years old and 31.5% are between 46 and 60 years of age. The largest group of respondents is between 21 and 35 years of age. However, according to the Statistical Consultation Service of the North West University, the statistics were meaningful and valid, and reliable conclusions could be drawn.

Causes of conflict

Section B of the questionnaire was designed to identify which factors contribute to and create conflict.

Competitions, diversity, availability of resources, distribution of resources and misuse of power have all been identified as sources of intergroup conflict by means of the literature study. It is important to evaluate whether these sources exist in reality in an organisation. The mining organisation is a very diverse organisation with a diverse workforce. Thus testing these items will identify whether these sources of intergroup conflict are evident in the mining organisation.

The following are the ten constructs that have been tested in the questionnaire:

- B-1: Affirmative action programme;
- B-2: Cultural differences;
- B-3: Racial differences;
- B-4: Implementation of new management techniques;

Table 1. Biographical information of the respondents.

Item	Category	N= 108	Percentage
Sex	Male	74	68.5
	Female	34	31.5
Qualification	- Gr 10	5	4.6
	Gr 11	6	5.6
	Gr 12	52	48.1
	Diploma	26	24.1
	Degree	10	9.3
	Post-grad	9	8.3
Tenure	1-4 years	24	22.2
	4-10 y	24	22.2
	11-15 y	15	13.9
	16-20 y	8	7.4
	21-25 y	21	19.4
	26-30 y	9	8.3
	+31 y	7	6.5
Age	- 20	1	0.9
	21-35	42	38.9
	36-45	31	28.7
	46-60	34	31.5
Language	English	16	14.8
	Afrikaans	35	32.4
	Setswana	16	14.8
	Sesotho	12	11.1
	isiXhosa	17	15.7
	isiZulu	12	11.1
Department	HR	38	35.2
	Mining	12	11.1
	Geology	10	9.3
	Environment	7	6.5
	Production	2	1.9
	Financial	10	9.3
	English	11	10.2
	Communication	2	1.9
	IT	7	6.5
	Construction	3	2.8
	Seismic	4	3.7
	Ventilation	2	1.9

B-5: Availability of resources

B-6: Competition between groups and departments;

B-7: Implementation of new technology

B-8: Extent and contents of work;

B-9: Uneven distribution of scarce resources;

B-10: Misuse of power by superiors and group leaders.

Table 2 demonstrates that skewness and kurtosis are

within +3.0 to -3.0 and + 7.0 to -7.0. Thus normality exists.

Interpretation on the results shows that Affirmative action (B-1) plays a huge role in the workplace. More than 51.9% of the respondents in the mining organisation indicated that affirmative action is a source of conflict.

Affirmative action can create racial conflict. 50% of the respondents indicate culture (B-2) as a source of conflict, while 41.9% do not acknowledge it as being that. This is an indication that there are mixed feelings about cultures. However, cultural differences must be considered to be a problem when half of the respondents see it as a source of conflict.

More than 51.9% of the respondents answered yes and 43.4% answered no to racial differences (B-3) as a source of conflict. Only 4.6% were unsure. More than half of the respondents see race as a source of conflict, thus implying that more than half do not work in racial harmony and see race as a problem. 53.7% of the respondents indicated that the implementation of new management techniques (B-4) is a source of conflict. Thus management is not implementing the new techniques in the appropriate manner. Management must evaluate existing techniques and look to alternative management techniques.

The availability of resources (B-5) is very important for any employee and workgroup to function efficiently (Bartos and Wehr, 2002). Keeping this in mind, 51.9% of the respondents indicated that availability of resources is a problem in the organisation. This is an indication that there is a lack of resources in the organisation Kreitner and Kinicki (2008) insist that a lack of resources will lead to intergroup conflict.

Muzafer (1966), Levine and Campbell (1972), Hewstone and Brown (1986), Insko and Schopler (1998) and Hewstone and Cairns (2001) indicate that competition (B-6) is one of the main sources of intergroup conflict. 38.9% of the respondents indicated that competition is a source, while 47.2% indicated that it is not and 13.9% were unsure. Most of the respondents did not see competition between departments or work groups as a source of conflict but 38.9% is a large portion and this proves that competition is a problem in organisations and that management must aim at creating positive rather than negative competition.

Thompson (2004) indicates that implementation of new technology (B-7) plays a major role in organisations, teamwork and group work. Thus it is important to determine whether new technology plays a role in the organisation and conflict. Only 34.4% of the respondents indicated that the implementation of new technology is a source of conflict, while 54.6% indicated no and 10% were unsure. Thus the majority does not see this as a source of conflict. 48.1% of the respondents indicated that both the extent and contents of their work (B-8) are sources of conflict. When goals and work are unclear, it might lead to conflict.

Respondents were all clearly unsure about the distribution of resources (B-9) in the organisation. 38% of

Table 2. Factors contributing to conflict in a large mining organization.

Variable	N	Mean	Median	Skewness	Kurtosis	Yes (%)	No (%)	Unsure (%)
B-1	108	1.65	1.00	0.685	-0.915	51.9	31.5	16.7
B-2	108	1.58	1.50	0.649	-0.551	50.0	41.7	8.3
B-3	108	1.53	1.00	0.595	-0.581	51.9	43.5	4.6
B-4	108	1.59	1.00	0.779	-0.645	53.7	33.3	13.0
B-5	108	1.61	1.00	0.723	-0.698	51.9	35.2	13.0
B-6	108	1.75	2.00	0.366	-0.840	38.9	47.2	13.9
B-7	108	1.77	2.00	0.236	-0.621	34.3	54.6	11.1
B-8	108	1.64	2.00	0.616	-0.728	48.1	39.8	12.0
B-9	108	1.83	2.00	0.288	-1.188	38.0	40.7	21.3
B-10	107	1.50	1.00	1.051	-0.226	61.1	25.9	12.1

the respondents indicated that they see this item as a factor contributing to conflict. According to Marx (1965), Muzaffer (1966), Kreitner and Kinicki (2008), and Brown (2002), the distribution of resources is a source of conflict. This also applies to this organisation where uneven distribution of resources clearly is a source of conflict.

Misuse of power (B-10) by superiors and group leaders is the last item in Section B. There is an indication that power plays a major role in intergroup conflict and is a major source of intergroup conflict. This is also evident in this organisation. 61.1% of the respondents answered yes, 25.9% no and 13% unsure. This is an indication that superiors are in constant battle for power and that they misuse power. This can pose a serious problem and management must seek to eradicate this misuse of power by certain group leaders and superiors.

The resulting consequences of intergroup conflict

If an employee experiences intergroup conflict it may influence him/her in the form of stress, anger, alienation and declining cooperation. This might in turn affect the functioning of the group and intergroup relations negatively (Allen, 1982; Hewstone and Brown, 1986; Robbins, 1996; Hewstone and Cairns, 2001; Brown, 2004). Galinsky (2002) indicates various strategies which the individual can implement in order to reduce or resolve intergroup conflict and create better employment relations. Thus it is important to identify what influence intergroup conflict can have on the employees or individual group member.

Section C consists of ten items. Items C-1 to C-8 directly implicate the influences of intergroup conflict on the individual, while items C-9 to C-10 ask two important questions which directly implicate the management of the mining organisation.

- C-1: Not possible to perform;
- C-2: Become hostile towards colleagues;
- C-3: Decline cooperation;

- C-4: Develop stress;
- C-5: Consider a job change;
- C-6: Alienate myself from other staff members or group members;
- C-7: Develop physical health problems;
- C-8: Productivity decreases;
- C-9: Are you aware of any policy document or standard procedures that address conflict handling and solution?
- C-10: Would you be willing to take part in a training programme in order to gain more knowledge on conflict and on handling/managing it?

It is evident from Table 3 that skewness and kurtosis are within +3.0 to -3.0 and + 7.0 to -7.0. Normality therefore prevails.

More than 29.7% of the respondents answered yes, 53.7% answered no and 16.6% were unsure. This is an indication that more than half of the respondents are still able to perform (C-1) under the pressures of intergroup conflict, while almost 30% answered yes. This performance with conflict can indicate that conflict occurs in organisation almost daily (Kreitner and Kinicki, 2008). Only 23.1 answered yes and 12% were unsure on question which tested the employee's hostility towards colleagues (C-2). The majority, 64.7%, indicated that they do not become hostile towards colleagues.

Cooperation (C-3) is very important in intergroup relations and if cooperation fails it will lead to full-blown intergroup conflict (Muzaffer, 1966; Tajfel, 1979; Tajfel and Turner; 1983; Hewstone and Cairns, 2001; Brown, 2004; Kreitner and Kinicki, 2008; Nelson and Quick, 2006). 35.2% of the respondents answered yes, while 49.1% answered no. This is an indication that cooperation can decline when conflict exists, while 49.1% of the respondents still cooperate when they experience inter-group conflict. A large percentage, 15.7% of the respondents were unsure about the occurrence of cooperation.

Conflict can be very stressful (C-4) and might influence the employment relations wellness of the organisation. Stress and intergroup relations go hand in hand (Ratzburg, 1999). 61.1% of the respondents answered

Table 3. Influences of intergroup conflict on employees.

Variable	N	Mean	Median	Skewness	Kurtosis	Yes (%)	No (%)	Unsure (%)
C-1	108	1.87	2.00	0.157	-0.761	29.6	53.7	16.7
C-2	108	1.89	2.00	0.018	-0.103	23.1	64.8	12.0
C-3	108	1.81	2.00	0.275	-0.874	35.2	49.1	15.7
C-4	108	1.45	1.00	1.029	0.042	61.1	32.4	6.5
C-5	108	1.70	2.00	0.461	-0.816	42.6	44.4	13.0
C-6	107	1.84	2.00	0.162	-0.623	29.6	55.6	14.0
C-7	108	1.79	2.00	0.107	-0.401	30.6	60.2	9.3
C-8	108	1.67	2.00	0.507	-0.728	44.4	44.4	11.1
C-9	108	1.59	1.00	0.756	-0.620	52.8	35.2	12.0
C-10	108	1.29	1.00	1.988	2.645	79.6	12.0	8.3

yes. This is an indication that stress plays a major role in the individual experience of intergroup conflict. Only 32.4% indicated that they do not experience stress and 6.5% were unsure.

Item 5 consisted of employees considering a job change when experiencing conflict. 42.6% indicated yes, 44.4% no and 13% were unsure. This can be alarming for the organisation and management. It must imply that conflict is so severe at times that 42.2% of the respondents considered a job change. The 13% that were unsure might be in two minds – leave the job or get on with it. When employees want to leave the organisation, a quick solution must be implemented to reduce the conflict and create better employment relations.

The construct applying to this question is alienation (C-5). Karl Marx, in Havenga (2004), indicates that alienation is an antecedent of conflict, and clearly can become a problem in the workplace. 29.2% of the respondents indicated that alienation takes place and that they alienate themselves from co-workers and group members. Twelve percent of the respondents were unsure about alienation taking place. These employees might start feeling alienated or are not sure whether they are alienated. However, 55.8% of the respondents answered no, indicating that they do not feel alienated. Thus it can be seen as a positive, indicating that alienation does not play such a huge role in the organisation and group work.

Item 7 can be closely associated with employee wellness. If the employees develop physical health problems it will influence their ability to perform. Most of the respondents (60.2%) indicated that they do not develop physical health problems, which can be seen as positive. However, 30.2% indicated that they do endure physical health problems resulting from conflict. This can be a problem, because from a population of 108 respondents 30.2% developed physical health problems. Conflict can cause stress and the management must introduce remedies to limit stress and create employee wellness.

Item 8 included productivity. Productivity is very

important for the functioning of an organisation. No organisation can be successful if the organisation, employees and workgroups are not productive. 44.4% respondents answered yes or no respectively and 11.1% unsure. An even percentage of respondents indicated that their own productivity decreases or does not decrease. It is alarming to note that 44.4% of the employees who suffer from conflict will display deteriorating productivity. The organisation can lose a lot of time, money and resources due to this. However, this also shows that 44.4% of the respondents are still productive when experiencing conflict or intergroup conflict.

In C-9, the following question was raised: Are you aware of any policy document or standard procedures that address conflict handling and solution? 52.8% of the respondents indicated that they were aware of such a policy, while 35.2% said no and 12% were unsure. This adds up to 47.2% of the respondents that are not aware or partially aware of a conflict handling policy. The management must ensure that all employees are aware of such a policy or procedure in order to deal with conflict appropriately. Management must ensure that employees are educated regarding conflict in the workplace.

Item 10 raised the following question: "Would you be willing to take part in a training programme in order to gain more knowledge on conflict and on handling/managing it?" The majority of the respondents (79.8%) indicated yes. This implies that there are no such training programmes in place in the organisation and that there is a high demand for conflict training programmes.

The respondents own experience of intergroup conflict

Section D evaluates the employees' own experiences of intergroup conflict with the results portrait in Tables 4 and 5. The following were the items in Section D:

D-1: To what degree (daily, weekly, monthly or yearly) do you experience intergroup conflict in the workplace?

Table 4. The employees' frequency-experience of intergroup conflict.

Variable	N	Daily (%)	Weekly (%)	Monthly (%)	Yearly (%)	Never (%)
D-1	108	52.3	22.2	15.7	9.3	0.0

Table 5. The employees' own experience of intergroup conflict.

Variable	N	Yes (%)	No (%)	Unsure (%)
D-2	108	24.1	69.4	6.5
D-3	108	64.8	26.9	8.3
D-4	108	43.5	49.1	7.4
D-5	108	47.2	39.8	13.0
D-6	108	88.0	11.1	0.9
D-7	108	30.6	59.3	10.2

D-2: Do you see all conflict in the organisation as negative?

D-3: Do you think conflict between groups/ or departments affect productivity in the organisation in a negative manner?

D-4: Do you think conflict can have positive outcomes for the organisation?

D-5: Do you think it is important that groups and departments function interdependently of each other?

D-6: Do you think cooperation between groups and departments is necessary to achieve organisational goals?

D-7: Do you think conflict between groups or departments can be eliminated in the organisation?

D-8: Do you feel that intergroup conflict can be eliminated?

D1 tests to what degree (Daily, weekly, monthly or yearly) the employees experience intergroup conflict. The results in Table 4 shows that most of the respondents of this organisation (52.3%) experience intergroup conflict on a daily basis, while 22.2% said on a weekly basis, 15.7% on a monthly basis and 9.3% on a yearly basis. The degree of conflict can fluctuate, especially between departments, for reasons of cooperation and negotiations (Hewstone and Brown, 1986; Nelson and Quick, 2001).

D2: As depicted in Table 5 569.4% of respondents indicated that they do not see all conflict as negative, while 21.1% indicated yes and 6.5% were unsure. This can be seen as a positive, because the majority of the respondents did not view all conflict as negative. D3: In this mining organisation 64.8% of the respondents indicated that intergroup conflict would affect productivity negatively, 26.9% indicated no and 8.3% were unsure. This means that most of the respondents see intergroup conflict affecting productivity negatively.

D4: Item D5 evaluated positive outcomes of intergroup conflict and 43.5% indicated yes, 49.1% no and 7.4% were unsure. This means that 43.5% of the respondents

feel that intergroup conflict can have positive outcomes. This is very important because positive conflict outcome will create sound employment and intergroup relations.

D5: Interdependent functioning is one of the most important aspects in intergroup relations and this is evident in the response. More than 47% of the respondents indicated yes, 39.8% no and 13% were unsure. Most of the respondents indicated yes, which stresses the importance of interdependency in intergroup relations.

D6: Cooperation is vital to sound intergroup relations (Muzaffer, 1966). Eighty-eight percent of the respondents indicated yes to cooperation in order to achieve organisational goals, while only 11.1% indicated no and 0.9% was unsure. This highlights the importance of cooperation in intergroup relations.

D7: In item D7, elimination of intergroup conflict was evaluated and 30.6% of the respondents felt that intergroup conflict can be eliminated, while 59.3% said no and 10.2% were unsure. It is obvious that most of the respondents accept the fact that intergroup conflict will never be eliminated.

DISCUSSION

The empirical data was evaluated and discussed in this chapter. Intergroup conflict is such a broad field of study that much more intense research on intergroup conflict in The most significant findings show that the 108 respondents consisted of 74 (68.5%) male workers and 34 (31.5%) female workers. Respondents with Afrikaans as home language are the highest percentage respondents with 32.4%. The English-speaking respondents consist of 14.8%, while the other 53% are made up of the African language groups. This is an indication that this organisation's workforce is culturally diverse. The majority of male respondents (56.8%) see affirmative action as a source of conflict and 80% of respondents

with grade 10 or lower see AA as a source of conflict. 75% (25) of Afrikaans respondents and 63% (11) of English respondents indicated that affirmative action is a source of conflict, while only 38% (57) of African language respondents indicated that affirmative action is a source of conflict. This is indicative of a huge difference and the Afrikaans respondents see affirmative action as a matter of great concern in the organisation. There is also a considerable difference in the way the departments experience affirmative action. The Phi is 0.621, which is relatively high and may be attributed to the way in which affirmative action is implemented and applied in the various departments.

Competition between groups, which is a matter of great concern in intergroup relations, is evident in this organisation. 38.9% of respondents see competition as a source of conflict, while in the mining department, 75% (9) of the respondents, 100% (3) of construction and 82% (9) of the engineering department respondents indicated that competition is a source of conflict. The mining, construction and engineering departments experience much more competition between departments than the other departments. Thirty-seven percent of respondents with 1 to 4 years' tenure indicated that the availability of resources is a source of conflict, while 67% of respondents with 1 to 4 years' tenure indicated that there is an uneven distribution of resources as a source of conflict. This is very contrasting.

Misuse and abuse of power by superiors is the most prominent source of conflict in the organisation. More than 61.1% of the respondents indicated that abuse of power is a source of conflict. Misuse of power by superiors and tenure has a Phi of 0.363. Seventy-one percent of respondents with 5 to 10 years' tenure, 71% with 11 to 15, 75% with 16 to 20, 62% with 21 to 25 and 88% with 31+ years' tenure indicated that misuse of power by superiors and group leaders is a source of conflict, while only 42% of respondents with 1 to 4 years' tenure indicated the same. Thus respondents with longer than 5 years' tenure experience a larger amount of power abuses by superiors.

Another significant finding is that 79.8% of the respondents indicated that they are willing to participate in a training programme in order to gain more knowledge on conflict and on handling/managing it; hence emphasizing that there is a demand for such programmes and that there might be a lack of conflict training in the organisation. It was found that cooperation plays a major role in intergroup conflict and intergroup relations. Cooperation between groups or departments is vital to performance in intergroup relations. Eighty-eight percent of responses indicated this. It is also evident that in every department and across all home language groups cooperation between groups and departments is evident. Another significant finding was that the higher the qualification, the more the acknowledgment of cooperation.

There is also an indication that the longer the tenure at the

organisation, the greater the importance of co-operation. The afore-mentioned empirical findings relate to the finding in the literature part of this study. Certain findings correlate directly with findings in literature and support the empirical findings.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of this exploratory study nonetheless provide pointers and several productive avenues for continuing research on the sources of conflict, which ultimately should contribute to the emergence of more effective conflict diagnosis and management strategies.

From the findings in the literature study it can be said that a strong correlation exists between intergroup conflict and employment relations wellness. It was also found that healthy employment relations are necessary to ensure healthy intergroup relations. Stress and burnout play an important part in intergroup relations and intergroup conflict. This is evident in the mining organisation where 61.1% of the respondents indicated that they feel stressed out when experiencing intergroup conflict. Furthermore, 42.2% of employees consider a job change and 30.2% of respondents experience physical health problems when experiencing intergroup conflict. It was found that cooperation is vital to creating healthy intergroup relations. This is supported by the empirical study according to which 88% of the employees of the mining organisation indicated that cooperation is necessary to achieve organisational goals. It was also found that the longer an employees' tenures at the mining organisation the stronger their appreciation for cooperation.

In concluding the current study, albeit tentative, raised awareness of the multifaceted nature of sources of conflict and revealed both universal and idiosyncratic content in the sources and effects of conflict. This underscores the importance of maintaining a contextual and systemic frame of mind when conceptualizing and operationalizing sources of conflict and indeed when contemplating the effective resolution of conflict in organizational settings.

LIMITATIONS AND SCOPE FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Notwithstanding the exploratory aims, the findings of the current study should be interpreted with a measure of caution. In the current study the range and nature of sources of conflict and its manifestation have been constrained by the theoretically-inductive approach adopted by the researchers in conceptualising sources and effects of workplace conflict. The results of the principle components analysis suggest that more potential sources of conflict exist than those reliably extracted. Continuing research should consequently concentrate on the theoretical elaboration and refinement

of the tentative measures employed in this study. This should address both the range of potential sources of conflict, and the item pool which operationalizes such theoretically derived constructs. However, it would be more productive and expedient to engage in in-depth exploratory qualitative research to supplement the prevailing understanding of theoretically-derived conflict sources - as a precursor to elaborating and refining the measurement instruments.

The current study furthermore indicates that reductionistic conceptualisations of otherwise elaborate and complex dynamic constructs such as sources of organisational conflict, is a material threat.

The exploratory design utilised in the study, while revealing in many respects, nonetheless imposed constraints which precluded analyses and observations on causality. Future research should also probe the extent to which specific sources of conflict contribute to specific response patterns (experienced impact of conflict), and whether specific types of conflict (sources) may elicit specific behavioural, emotional and psychological responses. This points to a need also for more systemic theories of conflict that not only reveal causality between antecedent conditions, sources and experienced effects of conflict, but adequately accounts for personal (for example, psychological), institutional and broader contextual factors that relate to the phenomenon of workplace conflict.

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