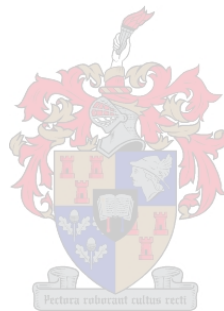


# Costing conflict: A multiple case study approach to quantifying conflict in the mining industry of South Africa

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Thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Commerce at the University of Stellenbosch

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March 2013

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The completion of this study has been made possible by the patience and the expert knowledge of mentors, family and friends. I would like to thank those individuals that gave their time and energy to encourage and assist me to make this research initiative possible.

First of all I would like to thank Mr Gawie Cillié for his commitment and support throughout the duration of this study. Without his expert guidance and drive it would not have been possible.

Secondly, I would like to thank the family and friends that gave up countless hours of their time to be a soundboard to ideas - in particular I would like to thank Alice Venter and Adeline Burger who patiently assisted with the editing and proof reading of the final product.

Lastly I would like to thank the company and the employees who willingly participated in this study; they took time out of their busy schedules to assist and for that I am grateful.

Thank you all for the part that you have played in this academic achievement.

## ABSTRACT

This study will focus on conflict within organisations in the attempt to gain clarity on this very common phenomenon and to link conflict to financial cost. By gaining a financial grip on conflict this study attempts to give the reader the tools with which to estimate parameters and calculate financial costs within their own conflict situations. The reader will also be able to motivate the need for management to invest in pre-emptive conflict resolution structures.

The study will focus on a sample population from the mining sector in South Africa. A multiple case study approach is used in order to understand the intricacies that make conflict a variable, situation-dependant occurrence after which data is collected to calculate a preliminary estimate of the financial costs incurred by the organisation due to hostilities within the sample population.

The results of the study indicate that the samples chosen experience different types of conflict and also manage the conflict in different ways. The calculations reflect that conflict impacts on the organisation in a fiscally prominent way. Each case has its own unique major contributors to monetary costs incurred due to conflict depending on case specific attributes.

The results clearly show that the financial cost of conflict has a severe impact on an organisation. The structured analysis provided by the study gives the reader a method with which to calculate the costs of conflict within other cases where conflict is assumed to have a negative impact on performance. In this way it becomes easier for the practitioner to effectively motivate for preventative action.

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

Conflict in organisations is an inevitable consequence of diversity in culture, opinion, mannerisms and interaction patterns. The differences in opinion and thinking styles are necessary ingredients to assist the organisation's adaptive functioning by ensuring that decisions are questioned and concerns are raised well in advance. Healthy conflict systems promote this inquisitive way of interacting with the working environment but unhealthy conflict can cause a toxic environment to negatively affect an organisation's performance and individual contributions.

Conflict is a social phenomenon that is well researched and documented to be a destructive and debilitating occurrence to organisational functioning when not kept in check. When managed properly, research claims that conflict can have many beneficial outcomes. Constructive outcomes such as improved decision making and better understanding of diversity have been published.

Yet, even though the consequences of conflict have been thoroughly documented little to no research has translated these outcomes into financial terms. The result has been clear: even though organisations agree that conflict can be destructive, the active management of conflict has been severely underfunded and preventative methods take a backseat in comparison to "fire fighting".

All the research into the positive effects of conflict mention that conflict can only yield positive results if constructive conflict management skills are present to channel possible negative emotions into constructive interaction patterns. In the event that conflict management skills are maladaptive, conflict will most certainly cause negative repercussions. It is the researcher's opinion that despite the overwhelming evidence supporting the notion that conflict can only be positive when conflict management skills are constructively used; very few companies proactively invest in conflict management training. Many investments are however made in order to establish an arsenal of "fire fighting" skills such as formal grievance procedures, disciplinary process training, monitoring systems, counselling and EAP and vast Employee Relations offices.

It is not within the scope of this study to investigate why companies lack the foresight to train their employees in managing this unavoidable social phenomenon, yet it is hoped that the attempt to quantify the outcomes of conflict might assist the Human Resources practitioner or Industrial Psychologist to motivate why this investment is such a dire need.

By translating the outcomes of destructive conflict into financial terms, a greater understanding of the true cost of conflict can be achieved. The study will focus specifically on the destructive outcomes of unmanaged or wrongly managed conflict in an attempt to show that fire fighting provisions do not justify the lack of investment in proactive conflict management training.

The goal of this study is to investigate several conflict scenarios and estimate the cost incurred due to conflict.

## 1.2 RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

Calculating the cost of conflict is a practice that is considered by many theorists to be an impossible task due to the variability of conflict outcomes. It is indeed difficult to quantify a process that is highly emotional and dependent on individual perceptions. Conflict outcomes are varied and depending on the situation can have direct, easily quantifiable outcomes influencing the bottom line (like turnover) or indirect outcomes that influence the bottom line over time (like low morale leading to presenteeism) (Cram & MacWilliams, 2012).

HR metrics has enabled the fraternity to measure people practices that was previously tracked using a “common sense” logic that was neither scientific nor rigorous. Metrics are developing to measure more and more complex HR issues but the science has much potential to be developed further. Of the metrics that are available several can be used to investigate the financial costs of conflict (Cascio & Boudreau, 2011).

Using a case study methodology, several cases can be investigated and HR metrics applied to calculate a basic understanding of the financial consequences incurred due to conflict. Even though this study does not have the scope to investigate all outcomes and quantify their financial effects on the business, a step is made in the direction of quantifying the cost

of conflict in order to gain a better understanding of the effects of conflict using a universal language - money.

### 1.3 RESEARCH INITIATING QUESTION

In cases where destructive conflict occurs, do the outcomes of conflict have a significant quantifiable monetary value? In essence: What is the financial cost of conflict?

### 1.4 OUTLINE OF THE STUDY

The present chapter outlines the rationale for the study, the research objective and the research question.

In Chapter 2 a literature overview provides a basis for understanding conflict as an unavoidable social phenomenon occurring frequently in organisations. Conflict is defined after which an understanding is built around different types of conflict. The potential outcomes of conflict are categorised in terms of primary, secondary and tertiary outcomes.

In Chapter 3 HR metrics related to the outcomes of conflict are discussed.

Chapter 4 introduces the methodology: a rationale for qualitative methods is given and a structure is outlined for the use of the multiple case study methodology. The method for data collection and data analysis is explained and potential ethical threats are mentioned. The case studies that are investigated are described in detail.

In Chapter 5 the results of the collected data are reported and the implications of the results outlined. Possible limitations of the study and recommendations are discussed.

In Chapter 6 the research results are discussed with exclusive emphasis on the cost calculations for conflict within the two case studies.

In the last chapter, Chapter 7, the limitations of the current study are discussed after which recommendations for future research is addressed. The study concludes with a summary of the findings.

The next chapter, Chapter 2 will provide an extensive literature study on conflict.

## CHAPTER 2: UNDERSTANDING CONFLICT

### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides an overview of the literature on conflict. Different definitions of conflict are provided after which three conceptual models, namely the systems, bureaucratic and bargaining model of conflict are discussed.

### 2.2 DEFINING CONFLICT

Conflict theorists have not settled on a universal definition of conflict due to the divide in research to either focus on conflict as a stable phenomenon or as a process with multiple facets. One element that theorists agree on is that conflict is essentially an inevitable social phenomenon (De Dreu, 2008; Pondy, 1967; Swanepoel, Slabbert, Erasmus & Nel, 1999). Wherever there is a need to interact and there are differences between people, conflict is to be expected as a natural consequence of diverging opinions.

Conflict is not incidental (unexplained, unpredictable exceptions to the rule as unitarists would argue) or predictable and avoidable (in the pluralist perspective) (Swanepoel et al., 1999). Conflict is a complex social phenomenon that manifests in human behaviour and involves emotions, perceptions and behaviours (Thomas, 1992; Swanepoel et al., 1999; Anstey, 2006). Due to its complexity, several researchers have simplified conflict into a stable structural phenomenon. They have populated research with multiple definitions of conflict:

Conflict is a *“perceived incompatibility of interest caused by a misalignment of goals, motivations, or actions between two parties that can be real or perceived to exist.”* (Kaushal & Kwantes, 2006, p. 580).

Conflict is *“the process which begins when one party perceives that the other has frustrated, or is about to frustrate, some concern of his”* (Thomas, 1992, p. 265).

Conflict is *“incompatible activities, where the one person’s activities are interfering, obstructing, or in other ways making the behaviour of the other less effective”* (Chen, Liu & Tjosvold, 2005, p. 280).

*“Conflict is a serious disagreement over needs or goals that are signified by a wide range of behaviours such as: gossip, avoidance, verbal abuse, passive/aggressive communication, and hostility” (Ford & Barnes-Slater, 2002).*

*“Conflict exists in a relationship when parties believe that their aspirations cannot be achieved simultaneously, or perceive a divergence in the values, needs or interests (latent conflict) and purposefully employ their power in an effort to eliminate, defeat, neutralise, or change each other to protect or further their interests in the interaction (manifest conflict)” (Anstey, 2006, p. 6).*

Conflict is *“the perceived differences in the goals and ideologies across the three interdependent and interactive functions... (namely)... interaction, interdependence and incompatible goals” (Xie, Song & Stringfellow, 1998, p. 193).*

Conflict is defined as an *“interactive process manifested in incompatibility, disagreement, or dissonance within or between social entities” (Samaha, Palmatier & Dant, 2011, p. 100).*

These definitions conceptualise conflict to be a stable phenomenon; the definition remains the same irrespective of the stage of the conflict episode. This effectively makes conflict easier to study but also denies conflict its dynamic qualities. The above listed definitions contain similar aspects but also makes reference to several core features of conflict that only come into play during specific conflict stages; manifest conflict will involve elements of the Xie, Song and Stringfellow (1998) definition whereas references are made to latent conflict in the Thomas (1992) definition. Conflict essentially involves procedural aspects that affect each other sequentially and therefore the phenomenon cannot be defined on a static definition.

For this reason this study will define conflict in terms of a process. Pondy's (1967) generic conflict process enables for all of the diverse definitions of conflict to be incorporated into a global, process driven definition:

Seen as a process, conflict interactions move through four distinct phases: latent conflict that can be perceived and/or felt by the involved parties, manifest conflict and the aftermath of the conflict situation (Pondy, 1967):



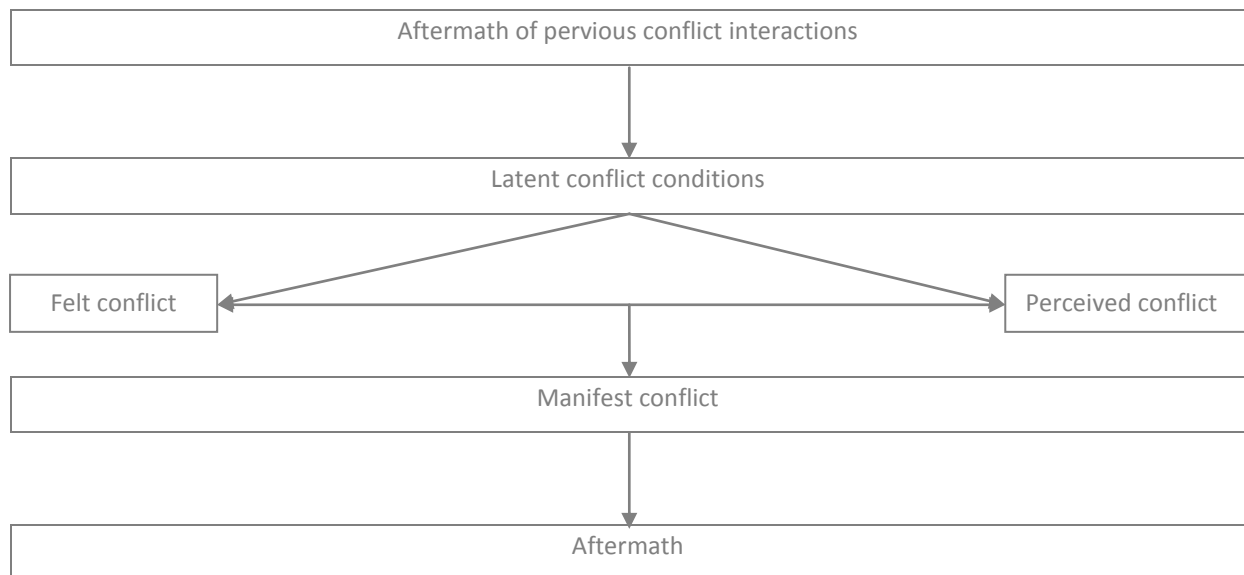


Figure 2.1. The conflict process (Pondy, 1967)

Pondy (1967) conceptualises conflict as a sequence of interlocking episodes, given direction through a set of latent, antecedent conditions. Power, authority, divergent goals, patterns of communication and the aftermath of previous conflict situations contribute to a set of antecedent conditions (Jehn, 1997). These antecedent conditions have been thoroughly researched by theorists who prefer to look at conflict as a stable phenomenon. All agree that several of these conditions can be present at any one time.

Xie, Song and Stringfellow (1998, p. 193) state that “conflict involves three general characteristics: interaction, interdependence and an incompatibility of goals”. Swanepoel et al. (1999) state that without interdependence, disagreements cannot be considered as conflicts because neither party has a stake in the other’s convictions. Each party needs to have the potential to interfere with the other in order to be considered a source of frustration and potential change (Thomas, 1992; Chen, Liu & Tjosvold, 2005).

In this stage conflict is dormant and situational factors have not yet given it a positive or negative direction.

Antecedent conditions provide the possibility for differences to cause friction but friction needs to be perceived by the parties for conflict to develop. Common definitions of conflict include similar statements to a “*perceived incompatibility of interests*” (Kaushal & Kwantes, 2006, p. 580). As a definition this is overly simplistic but it does provide a valuable insight: the parties involved in the conflict situation need to be cognitively aware of the conflict

(Swanepoel et al., 1999). Pondy (1967) describes this element of conflict as a step in a dynamic process called “perceived conflict”. But cognitive interpretations can differ in many fundamental ways (Thomas, 1992).

Pondy (1969) states that conflict can exist even if no latent conditions exist to encourage conflict; other latent conditions fail to even reach a level of awareness. There are many mechanisms that limit perceptions but it is not within the scope of this article to discuss this. Conflict can be due to real or imagined differences as long as the differences are perceived by both parties as being incompatible (De Dreu & Weingart, 2003). The perception of conflict is a “make or break” facet in the process. It is therefore not surprising that many interventions are aimed at perceived conflict and focus on sensitising individuals to antecedent conditions.

Pondy (1969) rightfully emphasises the necessity for latent conflict conditions to be perceived before conflict can progress. The pervasive impact of perceptions further complicates the process; perceptions need not be based on real differences - even if the differences are imagined it can serve as an effective trigger for conflict. Alternatively there might be the potential for conflict but if it is not perceived by at least one of the parties as a threat, the latent condition will remain latent and will not contribute to any noteworthy outcome. One might then argue that a conflict free zone would be the ideal working environment.

A conflict free zone would theoretically be achieved if

- there were no differences that create latent conditions for conflict or
- latent conditions to conflict were not perceived as a threat.

In the first instance perfect equality (in perceptions at least) would be a prerequisite. Because perfect equality does not exist, people will always perceive latent conditions of inequality that may invoke equity responses.

The latter instance might seem less idealistic but has also been proven unfeasible. Interventions aimed at encouraging individuals to perceive conflict as a non-threatening experience have not yielded successful results. A possible explanation is that individuals associate conflict with negative images because it creates a state of uncertainty -an innate desire to avoid situations that might be damaging contributes to the pervasive concept that

conflict is a threat. Because conflict is associated with anxiety it becomes something that should be suppressed if it cannot be avoided completely.

As unworkable as this line of reasoning may seem, it is still a pattern evident in many organisations. These organisations face problems such as group think, limited information processing and stagnation. The reason is that without conflict there might be less disruption but there will also be no progress. The unit (relationship, team and/or organisation) will inevitably stagnate because the status quo is never challenged and modified to better meet changing circumstances.

Whatever the reasons may be, a conflict free zone is both unrealistic and equally undesirable. The desire to strive towards a harmonious order within an organisation seems foolish. The only other option is to attempt to manage conflict.

Perceived conflict is a phase in the conflict process that carries an emotive component. Hammer (2005) reports that a negative emotional reaction is a form of antagonism in response to a situation where perceived incompatibility of goals between two or more parties is interpreted as significant enough to be a threat. In Pondy's (1967) research the perception of incompatibility arouses emotions that disrupt the emotive equilibrium of the individual. Stress, anxiety, frustration and anger are emotions that are frequently aroused due to the accurate or inaccurate perception that the actions of another individual might frustrate goal achievement (Thomas, 1992; Swanepoel et al., 1999). Collectively these emotions can be seen as psychological strain (Chang, Rosen & Levy, 2009).

The conflict process can be postponed in the perception phase by suppressing unpleasant emotions. Theories of "attention focus" state that the individual can make a conscious decision to focus on more pressing matters (Pondy, 1967). Whether the postponing of the disruptive emotions help the individual to "let go" of latent frustrations are however doubtful. Eventually perceived incompatibilities progress to a phase where affective states are too pressing to ignore.

Conflict research indicates that without an appropriate "pressure valve" (the pressure model of conflict) these emotions will build and eventually lead to disproportionate displays of conflict and/or adversely affect the individual's health (Katbleen, 2003; De Dreu, 2008; Pondy, 1967). Norms that allow the expression of conflict can serve as a pressure valve to

restore equilibrium (Anstey, 2006). The participation in athletic activities has also been recommended by stress and anxiety studies.

When affective or perceived conflict inspires action, the behaviour is called manifest conflict (Pondy, 1967). Hammer (2005) reports that many authors, including Costantino and Merchant (1996) and Ting-Toomey, Lee-Jung, Shapiro, Garcia, Wright and Oetzel (2000) as well define conflict as a process that involves substantive *expressed* disagreement. Sabotage, rumours, coalitions, withdrawal and violence are examples of manifest conflict. The expression can be verbal or non-verbal but both parties must feel that the divergence of interest is noteworthy and that one of the parties is willing to act on the divergence.

Manifest conflict is strongly moderated by organisational and societal norms regarding the display of conflict. Norms regarding the expression of conflict may vary greatly from one society to the next but no society tolerates high intensity, violent expressions of conflict (Anstey, 2006; Chen et al., 2005). These transgressions are usually punished and the transgressor imprisoned.

In cultures where a “tight knit family” norm has been established, pressure is placed on individuals to ignore latent conflict in favour of maintaining the status quo. It is therefore not surprising that group think, stagnation and overt counterproductive workplace behaviour (CWB) are frequently the reasons that these organisations under perform.

Most managers still steer clear of conflict instead of treating it as an inevitable social phenomenon that needs to be effectively managed, and the antecedents and outcomes understood. Their aversion might be due to organisational norms that classify conflict as taboo or it might be due to simply not knowing how costly conflict can be for an organisation if not managed properly. Indeed, if the total costs associated with conflict are taken into consideration, chances are the top structure would be mortified! Even though most organisational norms forbid overt displays of conflict, many forms of counterproductive workplace behaviour (CWB) are overt in nature and can include withdrawal behaviour, passive aggressive behaviour, presenteeism, low morale, withholding information and a toxic culture (Behafar, Peterson, Mannix & Trochim, 2008).

Whether the behaviour is overt or covert, manifest conflict has the potential to widen and inflate the field of perceived conflict (Pondy, 1967; Monash University, 2012). Pondy (1967)

uses the term “Conflict Aftermath” to demonstrate the feedback loop created when manifest conflict heightens awareness of latent conditions to conflict. Suddenly the target not only used up all the coffee but “constantly breaks rules” and “undermines authority”. Conflicts tend to get worse over time as negative perceptions are reinforced by agitating historical events. Wide perceptions heighten latent conflict conditions and exaggerate current perceived conflicts. Bargaining, budget meetings and grievance procedures are formal examples of interventions that aim to prevent conflicts that reach a level of awareness to become dysfunctional and damaging.

The results and the emotive residue left by conflict episodes set the scene for future conflicts (Chen et al., 2005). Repeated effective conflict resolution creates a positive feedback loop that increases the parties’ confidence in their ability to peacefully resolve disputes. Similarly repeated failures or an accumulation of frustrations degenerates communication and can result in a future deadlock or an increase in the potential for closed minded discussions (Chen et al., 2005). The emotive feedback loop is essentially adjusting perceptions; whether the adjustment is for the better or for the worse.

Jehn and Chatman (2000) explain the impact of perceptions further with the concept “perceptual conflict”. They define perceptual conflict as the perceptual variance between parties in terms of conflict source (procedural, relationship and task focussed conflict). If members disagree on the amount of conflict within a functional relationship, they might decrease their motivation and effort because they feel their sense of reality is not validated by others. Perceptual conflict is therefore a meta-conflict construct in that it explains the trepidation generated when individuals perceive different levels of conflict to exist.

Behavioural reactions to perceived conflict are more often than not designed to frustrate the goal achievement of the target but in the process might also frustrate the goal achievement of the work group or organisation. At the very least it makes life more difficult for the intended target. Manifest conflict can therefore be classified in terms of level of disruption. It is therefore not surprising that conflict has over the years become a concept people prefer to avoid. Ignoring manifest conflict does however not ensure that disruptive outcomes are avoided; in fact turning a blind eye or patching up cracks in the wall will only exaggerate the perceived incompatibility of goals. The conflict situation will only fester. Preventative efforts to manage perceived conflict seem to be the most cost effective way

but people are often in conflict as to whether or not they should directly or indirectly deal with problems (Swanepoel et al., 1999). Some organisations even attempt to ignore conflict until further delay is impossible. In some cases even a strike cannot motivate management to take employee dissatisfaction seriously. Waiting until employees “get it out of their system” is a costly way to save money! The management of conflict can therefore also become an area where substantive disagreement can hinder effective implementation of necessary procedures.

## 2.3 CONFLICT FRAMEWORKS

The general phases in the conflict process apply to all conflict situations but the direction of the conflict can differ. Calculating the costs associated with general conflict leaves a very broad field to analyse. It is a vague attempt that will yield limited usable results. Whether the conflict is lateral, vertical or between opposing interest groups, will add additional characteristics to the conflict episode making the analysis more specific.

Pondy (1967) proposes the use of three distinct models in order to classify the nature of the conflict episode: the bargaining model, the bureaucratic model and the systems model. Pondy (1967) discusses the models without schematically representing the information.

The bureaucratic model focuses on vertical conflicts; these are conflicts amongst parties that are in an authority relation. Attempts to control behaviour are typically met with resistance; different expectations and the exercise of power further exasperates the potential for conflict. With so many antecedent conditions it is not surprising that organisations are in need of formal grievance procedures and sometimes find themselves at the CCMA facing mediation, arbitration or, in serious cases, the labour court. The superior-subordinate dyad is the unit of analysis when focus is placed in the bureaucratic model.

Pondy (1967) uses the systems model to analyse the conflicts among the parties in a functional relationship. Here focus is placed on lateral conflicts. Lateral conflicts are most likely to be perceived by the organisation as a transient disturbance (Pondy, 1967). Their effects on performance are most likely to be ignored even though they can be severe. The tendency for organisations to ignore the warning signs that lateral conflicts are affecting performance might be due to the inability of HR to effectively demonstrate how these conflict episodes affect the bottom line of the business. According to Hammer, (2005) the

most prominent form of conflict is interpersonal conflict (lateral conflict). It is also the most under-researched and under-scored in terms of cost. For the scope of the current study focussing on lateral conflict is a tall order because there are no monetary measures with which to measure the impact of lateral conflict. However, several articles have focussed on the causes and outcomes of these, often ignored, conflicts. The nature of interpersonal conflict is explored using the systems model.

The bargaining model centres around the demands of competing groups. Typically these conflicts are seen in industrial relations disputes but can also be between different departments or between different companies in a coalition. Negotiation resolves the conflict between competing interest groups but deadlines, pressure tactics and limited resources cause conflicts in this model to become very costly. Strikes and lockouts are certainly the most spectacular pressure tactics used in these conflict situations. South African labour law permits these actions as a form of expressed disagreement between management and employees, granted that the parties involved follow a lawful procedure, but this does not mean that these actions are without cost. Severe losses in productivity and lower employee morale are some of the researched consequences of lawful labour disputes, not to mention the costs of unlawful actions like Wildcat strikes.

Anstey (2006) uses a classification system for conflict that differentiates between Sources of conflict, Aggravators and Moderators as well as Conflict behaviour:

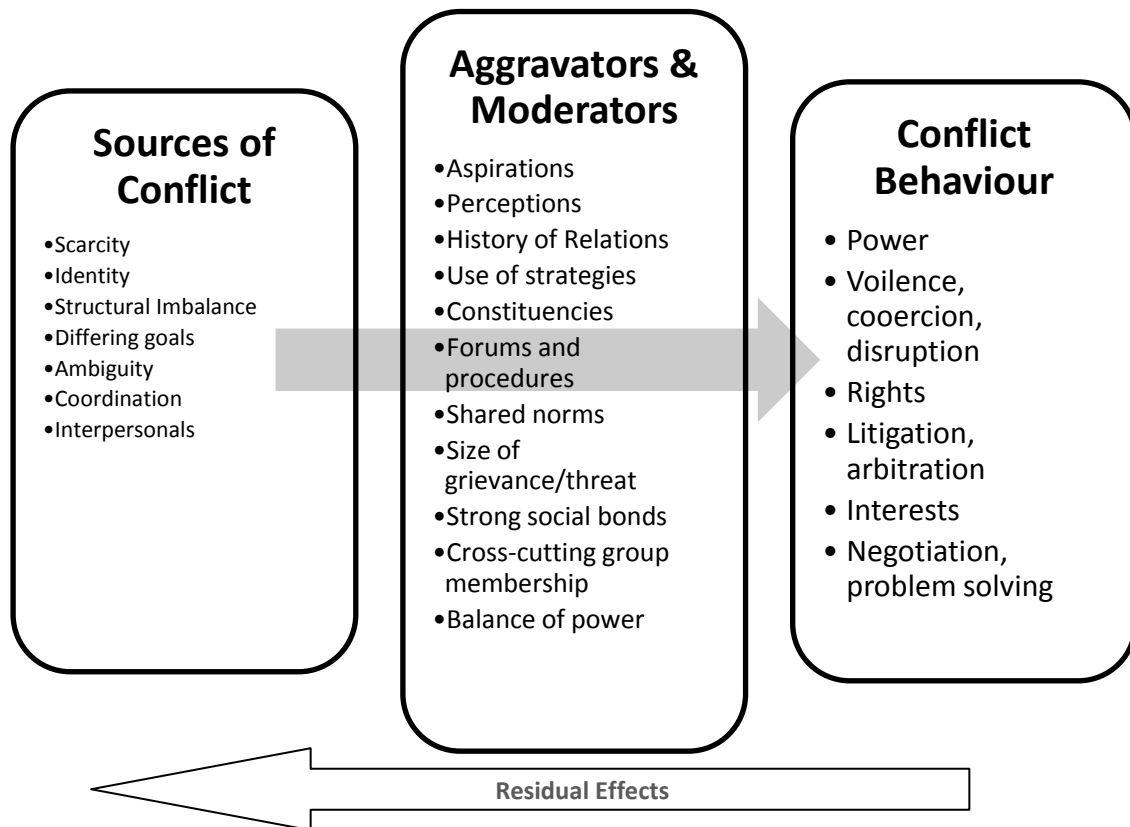


Figure 2.2. Classification of conflict (Anstey, 2006, p. 12)

Anstey's (2006) model clearly outlines some of the elements used to define conflict. Characteristics of latent conflict (sources of conflict), perceived and felt conflict (Aggravators and Moderators) and manifest conflict (conflict behaviour) form part of a conflict episode that, once completed, leave a conflict aftermath (residual effects) that influence future conflict situations.

The relevant combination of these effects will be determined by the direction of the conflict; e.g. litigation and arbitration will be rare in cases where the parties are not part of opposing bargaining groups. Other elements are more than likely part of any conflict scenario e.g. differing goals.

Anstey's (2006) model complements Pondy's initial conflict classification by fleshing out the possible pressure points in a social system where conflict is apparent. It is clear that Pondy's framework (1967) and Anstey's framework (2006) of conflict are very compatible and the two are integrated in order to explain conflict in the various models of conflict.



The Bargaining, Systems and Bureaucratic models of conflict make reference to different sources of conflict depending on the direction of the disagreement. The different conflict models proposed by Pondy (1967) are discussed in more detail in the next section.

### 2.3.1 THE BARGAINING MODEL (THE EMPLOYMENT RELATIONSHIP)

In this section the intricacies that cause conflict in the employment relationship are discussed by examining the sources (put differently: “latent conditions” that lead to conflict), the potential moderators and aggravators (perceived and felt conflict conditions) and expressed conflict (manifest conflict) that exist between the two groups (employees and employers).

Conflict is defined as a dynamic process that requires interaction and interdependence. Conflict also requires that one or more of the parties involved harbour the perception that the other has the potential to frustrate goal achievement. Taking these prerequisites into account, the employment relationship is ripe with conflict potential.

The employment relationship involves a process whereby labour sells time, energy and skills to the organisation in exchange for certain benefits. The exchange relationship that is established necessitates that labour and management are in continuous interaction in order to mutually fulfil the psychological and legal contracts of their bargain. Generally the two groups renegotiate the terms of their agreement once a year, even though they are not legally bound to; agreements extend indefinitely unless a preset time lapses or one of the parties give reasonable notice to terminate the agreement (Labour Relations Act 66 of 1995). The contentious nature of the employment-relationship makes for frequent re-negotiations.

The representatives of each of the two groups are under pressure to ensure that the expectations of those whom they represent are met. A state of uncertainty regarding the methods of confrontation and the possible outcomes create tension that gradually becomes more noticeable when re-negotiation talks loom.

The uncertainty stems from the fact that employees and employers have incompatible goals: employees want to maximise the benefits they receive with relation to their input and employers tend to want to minimise labour expense because this is usually the most costly

expenditure for an organisation. Both parties know that the attainment of the one goal has the potential to boycott the achievement of the other goal. The knowledge of this incompatibility creates conflict even before negotiations start.

Unitarians challenge this inherent discrepancy in goals by saying that both employee and employer have an interest in the continued survival of the business and will mutually (even if not equally) benefit from growth in revenue. Therefore, although it can be argued that employees and employers have similar interests in the long run, short term goals often clash. Unitarians argue that long term goals supersede the conflict of interest in the short term; they choose to focus on the mutual goals between employees and employers and this causes them to suppress and ignore conflict because to them it should not logically exist.

Logic is more complex than this over-simplified perspective. Although employers and employees are dependent on each other, greed masked as “good business sense” or “due reward” causes inequity that the other group will often try to restore via overt or covert methods (manifest conflict). Additionally, perceptions of equality are subjective and therefore open to Information Processing Errors (IPE) that might cause the parties to retaliate against so-called “ghosts”. Trust and open two-way communication are buffers against unsolicited manifest conflict (e.g. pre-emptive strikes). Trust takes years to build and can be destroyed in a second.

### 2.3.2 THE SYSTEMS MODEL (INTERPERSONAL CONFLICT)

The systems model and the bargaining model of conflict share many similarities but also differ in significant ways. In order to compare the systems model with the bargaining model of conflict, interpersonal conflict will also be discussed in terms of Prerequisites and Sources of conflict.

Barki and Hartwick (2001) quote several authors in order to define interpersonal conflict. They incorporate these definitions in a comprehensive definition:

“... a phenomenon that occurs between interdependent parties as they experience negative emotional reactions to perceived disagreements and interference with the alignment of their goals.” (Barki & Hartwick, 2001, p. 198)

From this definition clear prerequisites for interpersonal conflict emerge: “interdependence”, “perceptions of goal incompatibility” and “interference” or “interaction”. Barki and Hartwick (2001) discuss these pre-conditions in further detail but the discussion does not add any elements to the present study that have not been discussed within the first section on conceptualising conflict. They do however point out the importance of negative emotion in conflict situations. They stress that conflict is inevitably a disruptive social occurrence. This view might bias their study in favour of including negative affect as a necessary pre-condition.

Perceived “incompatibility of goals” is often followed by emotional reactions. The perception that another individual can disrupt your plans at goal achievement in the very least should elicit frustration and anxiety (if the parties are interdependent and goals are considered important). It is likely that the process picks up momentum when emotions are aroused but negative emotions are not the only emotions that can complicate the process: emotions such as excitement and exhilaration (positive emotions) can also be factors contributing to the expression of conflict. It seems possible that the experience of either negative or positive emotions will affect the choice in conflict expression.

Future research will have to establish whether the charge (positive or negative) of the emotions involved in the conflict process affect the expression of conflict. Will negative emotions lead to disruptive and counterproductive manifest conflict and positive emotions lead to constructive conflict such as collaborating attempts, debate and open discussion?

In the attempt to establish whether or not interpersonal conflict can have positive outcomes, researchers divide conflict in terms of focus or source. Several categories emerge: task-focused conflict, relationship conflict and procedural conflict. Different types of conflict affect performance related outcomes differently (Jehn, 1997; Behafar et al., 2008). The focus or source of conflict is discussed in more detail in Section 2.4.

### 2.3.3 THE BUREAUCRATIC MODEL (VERTICAL CONFLICT)

The bureaucratic model shares many similarities with the systems model and the bargaining model.

Conflicts within the bureaucratic model are frequently between two individuals (superior and subordinate), who are, to a greater or lesser extent, dependent on each other to

achieve their goals; subjective as well as some objective measures of performance include ratings of the supervisor's ability to control the performance of the subordinate, therefore the performance of the supervisor in part depends on the abilities of his subordinates. The subordinate's performance depends, to a degree, on the information and the degree of support given by the supervisor. A manner in which supervisors attempt to control the motivation and the subsequent performance of subordinates is imbedded in the reward system of the organisation; depending on the amount of control given to the supervisor he/she is able to control the external rewards (compensation, promotion and flexitime benefits) and the internal rewards (praise, recommendation and more autonomy) given to the subordinate. Even though the subordinate has the ability to influence the performance of his supervisor he is still at a disadvantage. The inherent power imbalance of his position in the formal hierarchy of the organisation creates a breeding ground for resentment.

Pondy (1967) calls the Bureaucratic model the "vertical dimension" of conflict because conflicts occur between individuals on different levels in the organisational hierarchy. Individuals at lower levels perceive higher levels of management as agents of "the company" – an entity that is seldom perceived to have their best interests at heart. Ineffective communication can maintain and further distort stereotypical views of one another (Easterbrook et al., 1993).

Goal setting and goal achievement are topics of discussion between employees and their supervisors. A clear understanding of each other's expectations has been cited in goal setting literature as a key ingredient in a functional and supporting working relationship (Kreitner & Kinicki, 2007; Klein, Wesson & Hollenbeck, 1999). Even though some goals are similar (achieving performance outcomes) other goals can differ significantly (the degree of autonomy and the manner in which goals should be achieved). Perceptions of goal incongruence can easily develop in a relationship where effective communication does not ensure that goal expectations are communicated, discussed and agreed upon.

Complicating the process is the difference in legitimate power and status between the subordinate and the employee; the use of power or simply just being aware of a power imbalance can cause communication problems as the parties struggle to manage favourable impressions conducive to forwarding their own goals.

Legitimate power emphasises the downward flow of authority from those in formal positions of authority to those in subordinate positions (Yukl, 2010). But legitimate power is a power with distinctive boundaries: an agreement (either formal or informal) specifically states the amount of power available to the individual and in which capacity he is allowed to exercise those privileges (Yukl, 2010). Even though this agreement specifies certain actions there is still room for considerable interpretation. Interpretations made by both the subordinate and the supervisor will determine their individual expectations for interactions. These interpretations are seldom congruent and therefore room opens up for misinterpretation, misunderstandings and offence.

## 2.4 SOURCES OF CONFLICT

Multiple sources of conflict can trigger disruption within the three models of conflict. The bulk of conflict research has focussed on defining and conceptualising the possible origins of conflict and therefore multiple authors have made contributions to the understanding of conflict sources.

In the following section sources of conflict in the systems model, bargaining model and bureaucratic model of conflict are discussed.

### 2.4.1 SOURCES OF CONFLICT IN THE BARGAINING MODEL

“Latent conditions” or “sources of conflict” can be defined as structural elements that can lead to perceptions of inequality and consequently inspire corrective action. Jehn (1997) refers to these conditions as antecedent conditions. Pondy (1967) uses the term “latent conditions” to conflict and Anstey (2006) and Swanepoel et al. (1999) “sources” of conflict. Some overlap between sources of conflict and moderators in the conflict episode is evident and therefore it will be beneficial to define the sources of conflict episode as purely structural elements that exclude the characteristics of the parties involved and are rarely subject to manipulation efforts.

Several sources of conflict are evident in South Africa. This section will focus on Scarcity, History, Change, Co-ordination and Information as well as Interpersonal Dynamics as some of the most salient sources of conflict in the employment relationship. It is however acknowledged that these sources are not an exhaustive list.

Resource Scarcity places pressure on any social system. Pressure to source physical Resources is a reality for many South Africans as they struggle to make ends meet on a day-to-day basis. According to Stats SA 34.4 % of South Africans live on R 174 per month (\$2 per day) and 11.3% of South Africans live on R87 per month (\$1 per day). These statistics were calculated using the 1995 and 2000 Income and Expenditure Surveys, the 1995 October Household Survey, and the September 2000 Labour Force Survey and show that a significant portion of the South African population suffers from extreme poverty. The need to source short-term cash in order to survive is a priority that many South Africans live with. The short-term perspective of many unions bargaining for increased wages can partly be attributed to a direct and pressing need of their members to survive in the face of rising petrol and food costs (Swanepoel et al., 1999).

A job is more than a scarce resource; it is a future. Restructuring and downsizing have however left many South Africans without an income and others fearing a similar fate. Outbreaks of xenophobia are only one symptom of a larger problem of unemployment. Organisations need to become more lean and efficient in order to compete with fierce global competitors but the emphasis on quantity despite sharply reduced resources increases stress and unhealthy working conditions. Increased stress and job dissatisfaction increases the potential for conflict (Lim & Cortina, 2005). It is indeed difficult to achieve a balance: the survival of the company with increasing pressure to be more cost-effective and ensuring the well-being of employees can sometimes seem like mutually exclusive objectives. Research shows that stress contributes to performance up to a certain point, after which performance starts to deteriorate (Robert & Hockey, 1997; Rothmann, 2003). Employers would like to think that the cut-off point is higher than it is and they often disregard the complaints of disgruntled employees until unions threaten action. At this point employees feel too mistreated to give management a fair chance to improve conditions and frequently make unrealistic demands.

What employers fail to realise is that their inaction has consequences more far reaching than simply dealing with another strike. South Africa is a developing country that has much to gain from foreign investments and even more to lose if current investors withdraw support. The more labour unrest and more politically unstable the country, the less able the

country to attract foreign investments which will cause a negative spiral that a company would be irresponsible to ignore.

Anstey (2006) and Pondy (1967) emphasise the importance of the conflict history of the parties in the conflict situation. A history of deep-rooted conflict becomes influenced utterances and is extended through group identity so that it becomes exceptionally hard to ensure co-operation (Anstey, 2006). COSATU's political involvement in the "struggle" is still a source of identity for many of its members and as South Africa struggles to eradicate racism it also struggles to ensure that stereotypes and pre-conceived notions do not influence conflict situations.

Groups observe themselves to be exploited by others either in terms of social, political or economic resources or in terms of symbols (in South Africa symbolic exploitation is often claimed by groups who feel that their language and culture are not acknowledged or protected against infringement). After the abolishment of Apartheid, South Africa embarked upon a series of changes and today, 18 years after the first democratic election, differences are formally tolerated and group rights are constitutionally protected. Yet accommodating diversity as a social commodity is still not a reality. Very few interventions are aimed at addressing stereotypes and normalising differences. The fact that society is still so divided can become a potential source of conflict (Anstey, 2006; Swanepoel et al., 1999).

Change is a source of conflict because any attempt at altering trusted structures has the potential to disturb the equilibrium. Change is ideally a reaction to ineffective strategies but unfortunately often precedes the clarification of new goals, behaviours and the exploration of alternatives (Anstey, 2006). To effect change for the sake of change, is costly and unnecessary.

Unfortunately this frequently happens when new leadership tries to establish ownership. The emotional result that accompanies any form of radical or continuous change is ambiguity and uncertainty that cause stress and confusion and in turn leads to conflict. Goals constantly shift but the pressure to raise performance gradually increases.

Change cannot be avoided as organisations need to be flexible in order to make use of opportunities and adapt to threats. Change is therefore a reaction to external pressures on

organisations to respond to a cut-throat global market. Downsizing and restructuring are equally uncompassionate actions that are, in most cases, necessary and in all cases feared.

Organisations need to become lean and productive to be successful. This has led many organisations to turn to technology to replace lower skilled work but a reliance on technology necessitates the availability of skilled employees to operate machines and manage computer systems. The nature of the psychological contract is thus changing to include less job security and the onus is placed on the employee to ensure that his/her employability increases. The “changing nature of work” does not decrease interdependence in employment relationships but has increased the potential for conflict.

Changes have not only occurred in the field of employment relationships but large scale social change in South Africa is occurring: successive changes to address the inequalities of the past in terms of labour law, social norms and accessibility of resources still cause individuals and organisations anxiety. After 18 years organisations still struggle with unfair labour practice, bargaining in good faith, owning up to the duty to bargain and to ensure trade union recognition. Additionally, companies need to change their structures and policies in order to transform the face of the labour force to include all races at all levels of management but in their drive to comply with Employment Equity legislation they sometimes forget to “pave the streets” to ensure a smooth transition. Perceived “token appointments” are the source of many conflicts. These and other similar actions are likely to create conflict as employees perceive one inequality to be exchanged for another.

Problems with co-ordination and information are directly linked to the South African history of minority white autocratic rule and a black suppressed labour force. Unaddressed stereotypes and misunderstandings lead to tensions as different perspectives interfere with co-ordinating activities (Swanepoel et al., 1999). Doubts spread and distrust increases as groups struggle to understand each other. Communication decreases and information is withheld. The inevitable result is more frequent misjudgements (IPE) and a tendency for pre-emptive conflict action. Relying on guesswork and assumption is a deathblow to negotiating proceedings.

In South Africa employers and employees have the right to request relevant information from each other if the information does not breach personal confidentiality, does not



interfere with the strategic interests of the business, does not contravene on a provision placed by law of the court on the employer and the effort required to source the information does not outweigh its usefulness (Labour Relations Act 66 of 1995, section 16). As valuable and necessary as this section can be, parties in conflict use the right to information as a method to distract, aggravate and frustrate the opposing party. Acquiring information can therefore become a source of conflict and the absence of information can become a source of misguided intentions.

The nature of conflict necessitates some form of interpersonal interaction. At this point it might be beneficial to discuss elements within the “systems model” of conflict.

#### 2.4.2 SOURCES OF CONFLICT IN THE SYSTEMS MODEL

Conflict in the Systems model can be commonly referred to as interpersonal conflict due to the tendency for conflict in the model to be heavily influenced by interpersonal disagreements; however, literature identifies three possible sources of conflict in the Systems model: relationship conflict, task related conflict and procedural conflict.

Relationship conflict is sometimes called affective conflict due to the tendency for conflicts that develop out of personal incompatibilities to be emotionally laden and highly charged (Jehn, 1995; De Dreu & Weingart, 2003). Interpersonal tension and frustration develop as a result of perceived incompatibilities within the personal sphere of the target. Research reports negative emotional reactions such as anxiety, frustration and uneasiness where people experience interpersonal problems (Jehn, 1995; Jehn, 1997). Chronic relationship conflicts have a severe impact on the working relationship, making individuals negative, irritable, callous and resentful (Jehn, 1997).

Relationship conflict is most frequently associated with negative effects on productivity and satisfaction (Jehn, 1997). These conflicts seem to limit the task related information processing capabilities of the individual because time and energy is focussed on personal matters (De Dreu & Weingart, 2003).

Up to date there has been little to no research with substantive evidence proclaiming the positive effects of relationship conflict on outcomes such as performance or job satisfaction. Hinds and Bailey (2003) report that two studies found member avoidance nullified the negative effects of relationship conflict on performance. This suggests that manifest

relationship conflict (the expression of disapproval) is the main culprit in decreased performance outcomes. Behafar et al. (2008) also mentions that teams with consistently low performance displayed openly discussed relationship conflict. As an effective counter argument, Jehn (1997) mentions two studies in which the authors report that time and mental resources are devoted to avoidance behaviour and the resolution of relationship conflict and that these resources detract from team performance. It seems likely that the long term effects of avoidance on performance and the effects of prolonged conflict on psychological strain are counterproductive. De Dreu and Weingart (2003) are equally convinced that relationship conflict is best dealt with by teaching members to deal with these inevitable conflicts effectively.

The emotional nature of relationship focused conflict makes the conflict situation volatile and disruptive because emotions overrun and over-simplify rational and instrumental thinking (Jehn, 1997). Blaming and defensiveness detract attention from task related aspects and subsequently performance decreases (Jehn, 1997).

Procedural conflicts (disagreements about how work is done) are considered part of task related conflicts (disagreements about what work is done) by some theorists and separate and distinct by others (Jehn, Northcraft & Neale, 1999). Those that consider process conflict to be distinct from task conflict define procedural conflict as the disagreements stemming from differences in perception surrounding task allocation, task delegation and the interpretation and implementation of procedures and policies (Jehn & Chatman, 2000; Behafar et al., 2008). Research reports that procedural conflicts have negative effects on performance. A reason for these findings might be that procedural conflict is particularly susceptible to the effects of attribution bias: when questions around individual skills and the distribution of tasks arise they are frequently met by feelings of indignation. Individuals easily see personal attacks when their skills or authority comes into question. The subsequent result is that procedural conflict often transforms into relationship conflicts (Northcraft, et al., 1999).

Task focused conflicts are conflicts that stem from incompatible perceptions surrounding the immediate distribution of resources and the interpretation of task related facts (De Dreu & Weingart, 2003; Jehn & Chatman, 2000; Behafar et al., 2008). Task conflict has been reported to increase decision quality through constructive criticism and stimulating

discussion (Jehn, 1997; Jehn, 1995; Hinds & Bailey, 2003; De Dreu & Weingart, 2003; Jehn, Northcraft, et al., 1999; Chen et al., 2005). But task conflict does not always lead to constitutive outcomes. For positive outcomes to be achieved there needs to be low emotionality, a high resolution potential, norms that encourage the appropriate display of disagreement and complex non-routine tasks with a high level of perceived importance (Jehn, 1997; De Dreu & Weingart, 2003; Chen et al., 2005). Even if these moderating influences are taken into account, positive results are still whimsical. De Dreu and Weingart (2003) researched the possibility of task conflict having positive outcomes in their meta-analysis. But they conclude by saying both relationship conflicts as well as task related conflicts have a negative and significant correlation with performance; albeit relationship conflict is more detrimental than task conflict.

The effects of task conflict on performance can be explained in terms of information-processing theories: as the conflict intensifies the emotional and cognitive arousal, the individual experiences increases to deal with the uncertainty. But in turn the cognitive load placed on the individual's coping mechanisms also increase. When the strain reaches a certain level the conflict interferes with flexibility and creative thinking (De Dreu & Weingart, 2003). If the levels of task related conflict are too high performance will subsequently decrease (De Dreu & Weingart, 2003). Jehn (1995) reports that the relationship between task focussed conflict and performance can be graphically represented by an inverted-U.

Task focused conflict only remains task focused if it does not disintegrate into affective/relationship or process conflict. Task conflict needs to be carefully managed through open, collaborative communication that builds shared understanding and respect for it to be potentially constructive (Hinds & Bailey, 2003). Of particular concern is the effect of attribution bias in transforming task conflict into relationship conflict (Jehn, 1995). For instance: a conflict that originates as differences in opinion on how to acquire office supplies can transform into a relationship conflict if one of the parties attribute the other member's suggestion as nepotism.

The emotional component inherent in conflict gives conflict the tendency to transform and expand; giving further support for the view that conflict should be studied as a process and not as a stable phenomenon.

Few task related conflict scenarios end in the positive effects research mentions. Additionally the costs associated with searching for additional information and making time for lengthy discussions may become unfeasible (Jehn, 1997). It is indeed a tightrope that can make you question whether or not conflict can truly be reigned in.

Studying conflict types independent from one another might lead to misleading results. Jehn and Chatman (2000) acknowledge the interconnected nature of the different types of conflict focus by analysing conflict as a compound. They suggest that conflict should be analysed as “proportional conflict” - in this way conflict is researched in terms of the entire conflict profile present, lest errors be made due to missing aspects of an interrelated phenomenon. Jehn and Chatman (2000) found that the positive effects of task related conflict only becomes apparent when both relationship focused and procedural focused conflict were low.

Positive outcomes can therefore be realised if the source of the conflict can be managed to focus on task related aspects. This is a tall order that begs the question whether conflict can effectively be managed in order to harness the potential to increase flexibility and creative problem solving.

A very large part of conflict research has focussed on conflicts within a group or team setting. The focus of research on team conflicts are due to pressure from transforming organisational structures: steep hierarchies can seldom cope with the need to become increasingly flexible, a drive towards flatter matrix structures with a focus on SDWT (Self Directed Working Teams) has been noticed. Thus far the discussion on the systems model has mainly focussed on conflicts that arise from one-on-one interpersonal interactions between individuals in a lateral authority relationship. Team structures further complicate the conflict dynamics in the systems model.

It is very clear that interaction and interdependence are clear prerequisites for groups to qualify as a team. Two types of groups are distinguishable in research: those responsible for routine and simple tasks and those that are responsible for non-routine and complex tasks that often require creative and innovative problem solving. Depending on the task or goal that needs to be achieved, different forms of conflict can have substantial negative effects on team performance.

Once again no research could be found on possible positive effects of relationship conflict on team performance. Jehn and Chatman (2000) go so far as to say that any and all conflict lowers satisfaction and threatens performance (irrespective of the immediate effects on performance) due to the tendency for conflict to become emotionally charged and transform into relationship conflicts.

It can be argued that when teams are faced with complex tasks, task related conflict early in the formation of the team can be beneficial. Task related conflicts (if resolved in a constructive way) ensure goal alignment and the perception of a shared direction that has been linked to increased motivation in team members (Jehn, 1997). Task related conflicts in teams with simple and routine task stalls task completion unnecessarily.

More often and especially with Self Directed Working Teams (SDWT), the process is less clear than the end goal. Conflicts around the means with which goals can be successfully attained form the bulk of process related discussions in groups. Process and task related conflicts have been linked to constructive outcomes such as creativity and multi-dimensional solutions. Studies that report positive outcomes to conflict seldom specify the type of conflict. It is possible that these studies unwittingly report on the positive effects of disagreements rather than conflicts.

Group cohesion refers to the tendency for a group to “remain united in the pursuit of a common goal or objective” (Easterbrook, Beck, Goodlet, Plowman, Sharples & Wood, 1993, p. 10). Hence it would seem reasonable to assume that a highly cohesive group would experience less conflict. Easterbrook et al. (1993) respond to this assumption by reporting on a study by Collaros and Anderson (1969). In their study they found that heterogeneous groups (in terms of skills and abilities) experienced more conflict in the beginning of their functioning but progressed to superior functioning once conflicts were successfully resolved.

More homogeneous groups were subject to the effects of “group think”. “Group think” can be seen as internal conflicts experienced by the individual and suppressed in order to maintain the illusion of group cohesion. They hush their own contributions if their opinions do not seem to match the dominant ideology. Therefore even though homogeneous groups experienced smooth, conflict free efforts at face value, their performance is not always at

an optimal level. Nor does it mean that the members do not experience conflict; it can simply mean that the expression of conflict is not overt and confrontational.

Effective decision making groups differ from other groups not in the amount of conflict but in the group's ability to differentiate between relationship based conflict and depersonalised conflict (task and process related conflicts) (Easterbrook et al., 1993). Such groups are better able to identify the possibility for constructive conflict and suppress conflicts that only cause disruptive negative emotions. The key to group performance therefore lies not in the ability to avoid and suppress conflict but in the skills to manage it.

Some theories postulate that group maturity leads to less conflict. This "waiting it out" ideology is evident in models such as Tuckman's classic model of group development (Tuckman, 1965). Out of the four phases of development - forming, norming, storming and performing - only one phase is characterised as having abnormal levels of conflict - storming. It is said that during this phase members suss out roles, norms and expectations. In later phases the group gains cohesion and the level of conflict subsides (Easterbrook et al., 1993). Many studies have supported this model but Easterbrook et al. (1993) rightfully states that the model only takes into account the primary effects of manifest conflict. It is possible that the group learns how to deal with conflict and suppresses emotional responses. In this case the maturity of the group says very little about the disruptive effects of conflict because it does not take into account the underlying levels of conflict that might impact on productivity.

#### 2.4.3 SOURCES OF CONFLICT IN THE BUREAUCRATIC MODEL

Easterbrook et al. (1993) mentions that a large percentage of organisational conflict can be attributed to ineffective communication. They point out that if a party perceives that the other uses communication to manipulate or control, then trust can be irreparably damaged. This is especially important in industrial negotiations (the bargaining model) but also in the bureaucratic model; supervisors are responsible for managing information interference and ensuring that employees are informed about policies, company protocol, future direction and relevant changes.

Keeping this statement in mind, focus should be placed on the potential difference in perception. Supervisors might feel it is within their boundaries to control information to

ensure the effective functioning of their subordinates. After all certain information is “confidential”. Subordinates might perceive these attempts as manipulative because it undermines their autonomy and refuses them the opportunity to make informed decisions. This perceptual difference can be termed as “a difference in the expectations on how control should be exercised”.

Superiors and subordinates can experience conflicts ranging from personal dislikes (relationship based conflict) to goal setting differences (task conflict) to disagreeing on the necessary steps to achieve these goals (process conflict). As previously mentioned the interdependent relationship between a subordinate and a supervisor makes it necessary for them to interact to achieve performance goals. The process therefore depends on effective communication. Misinterpretations and conflicting communication patterns can be a potential source of conflict but can also aggravate existing sources of conflict.

The difference in power and status between a subordinate and a supervisor grants the supervisor legitimate power (within certain limitations) over the behaviour of the subordinate. Individuals feel uncomfortable with the idea of being controlled by another and naturally resist attempts at controlling behaviour (Pondy, 1967). The nature of the employment contract however states that a certain amount of legitimate control can be exercised by appointed managers.

In aspects where the span of legitimate control is clearly specified (for instance in setting performance targets) conflict seldom erupts. In these situations conflict is only seldom where legitimate control is exercised by an individual who is perceived as the worthy occupant of the authority position (Yukl, 2010).

Conflict sources do not necessarily develop in isolation; the combined effects of one or more conflict source can “widen the perceptual field” (Pondy, 1967) to include aspects that would otherwise have been seen as legitimate requests. “Conflict compounds” can cause neutral/legitimate demands to be resisted as if they were unjustifiable attempts at control. When control is attempted in a clearly defined task related aspect (e.g. setting performance targets) but existing relationship conflict (e.g. a personal issue with the supervisor) and/or pre-existing process conflict (e.g. a disagreement with regards to the manner in which tasks are to be achieved) exists, neutral demands can be perceived as hostile threats or unjustifiable control attempts.

As previously mentioned in the section on interpersonal conflict, Jehn and Chatman (2000) call the conflict profile of a scenario, “proportional conflict”. Jehn and Chatman (2000) places focus on the compound effects of an interrelated phenomenon. The concept of “proportional conflict” might not be unique to the bureaucratic model but it seems likely that the power imbalance in “vertical relationships” aggravates the effects of “proportional conflict:

Managers attempt to ensure goal alignment by directing multiple subordinates in a pre-determined direction. In his manner the supervisor attempts to promote efficiency. Without authority he will not be able to exercise this critical task of directing behaviour and enforcing compliance. Compound conflicts threaten this stability because it gives the subordinate the rationale to resist control and direction.

The main source of conflict in the bureaucratic model is therefore the differing expectations on how control should be exercised. The struggle between autonomy and control is a tricky balance for most managers to achieve. They interpret subordinate resistance as a challenge to their authority and subordinates see management’s attempts at control as an exercise of personal power. In systems where open two-way communication ensures that subordinates and superiors communicate on control expectations, conflict will surely be much less.

Becoming aware of possible sources of conflict does not in itself ensure that the parties will be involved in conflict. Several conditions can aggravate or decrease the importance of the conflict source.

## 2.5 PACIFIERS AND AGGRAVATORS OF CONFLICT– POSSIBLE MODERATORS

Despite the sources of conflict, the characteristics of the parties involved and the actions they take can amplify or deflate the importance of the source of conflict. The presence of one or more aggravating factors elevates the source of conflict to be perceived as a potential obstruction to goal achievement.

Many aggravators have an emotive component that can be equated with “felt conflict” in Pondy’s (1967) conflict model. The perceived source of conflict combined with an emotive component encourages parties to act on the “obstruction”.



Pacifying variables on the other hand suppress the perception of conflict sources and the agents feel that the issue poses no threat to their goal advancement or the issue can be postponed to be dealt with at a later stage. Multiple mediating and aggravating variables can be present at one time.

Aggravating and Pacifying variables affect the perceptions of the different parties. The extent to which perceptions are influenced to interpret the event or to interpret the other group as threatening determines the importance of the aggravator or the pacifier as a moderating variable in the conflict process. The accuracy of the perception is not relevant for the perception to have significant effects on the likelihood of manifest conflict.

Some of the models specified in the previous sections depict potential moderators in the conflict process. This section will elaborate on the potential for various elements to encourage the party in question to act on the perceived source of conflict. Some moderators are specific to a conflict model and others are generic factors that contribute to the conflict dynamic irrespective of the model involved.

### 2.5.1 GENERIC MODERATING FACTORS

The previous section highlighted several sources of conflict but conflict is not as simple as reacting to a source of frustration. Several factors limit or encourage manifest conflict.

In their study on the impact of culture and personality of conflict management styles Kaushal and Kwantes (2006) fervently argue that culture plays a central role in the decision to adopt a strategy with which to manage a conflict situation. They define culture as the “shared values and beliefs” that develops through “experiences and socialisation” and guides behaviour by providing individuals with a “cognitive frame” with which to “interpret their surroundings” (Kaushal & Kwantes, 2006).

Their results indicate that organisational culture, characterised by a variety of variables, significantly influences the dominant choice in conflict management style. An example would be the positive effects of Social Sinicism (a dominant cultural value that encourages mistrust of others) on the choice to avoid conflict or dominate conflict but never to compromise or integrate differing views.

In cross-national investigations, it has been found that negotiating and bargaining require an astute understanding of the cultural preferences with which a culture approaches conflict (Chen et al., 2005; Lee-Ross, 2005; Holt & DeVore, 2005; Kaushal & Kwantes, 2006; Xie et al., 1998). Different cultures express conflict differently and this difference can cause misunderstandings and unintentional breaches of trust. The losses associated with failed cross-cultural negotiations have been reported to reach nearly \$ 2 billion per year (Lee-Ross, 2005).

Chen et al. (2005) give an example of cultural norms that dictate how conflict is to be expressed:

In Chinese culture emphasis is placed on resolving conflict in a less conspicuous manner. It is not acceptable to confront differences in public because both parties will “lose face” in the process; if losing face cannot be avoided conflict itself is avoided. Because of the tendency in Chinese culture to protect the “dignity” of others many researchers have theorised that this culture would use avoiding confrontational styles to the detriment of effective functioning (Holt & DeVore, 2005; Kaushal & Kwantes, 2006; Xie et al., 1998). Chen et al. (2005) found that this is not the case; even though highly negative outcomes were associated with confrontation in public, conflict itself was not avoided; the choice in venue and the manner in which differences were resolved were simply less aggressive than western styles. In an attempt to ensure “in-group” harmony, value is placed on emotional restraint in conflict situations. This feature has important implications for conflict management in societies that have different cultural norms in terms of the expression of manifest conflict. In this sense societies might be meaningfully divided into collectivists vs. individualist cultural orientations.

In Chinese culture the ends do not justify the means. Societal norms place emphasis on using less overt methods of manifest conflict in order to maintain “in-group” harmony. Research into collectivistic cultures has shown that they emphasise hierarchy and status which might lead them to adapt avoiding styles out of respect (Kaushal & Kwantes, 2006; Cai & Fink, 2002). In societies where there is a strong movement towards individualism, the focus will fall on personal autonomy, personal goals, personal achievement and self-fulfilment rather than protecting the image of the other party (Oyserman, Coon &

Kemmelmeier, 2002). Individualist societies are more likely to use assertive tactics such as confrontational or compromising strategies (Kaushal & Kwantes, 2006; Cai & Fink, 2002).

Culture and its link to conflict style have many implications for conflict theorists: because globalization is creating a multicultural workforce, it is safe to assume that the potential for conflict is also increasing (Holt & DeVore, 2005). What might be an acceptable way to manage conflict in one culture may be seen as unacceptable in another (Kaushal & Kwantes, 2006). Holt and DeVore (2005) quote Gudykunst (1998, p. 170): The communication style of "...European Americans' and African Americans' ... may be problematic when they communicate with each other, particularly in a conflict situation". Holt and DeVore (2005) also state that diversity can result in increased levels of conflict due to a disparity in acceptable conflict management styles.

In contrast to the view that people live in a metropolitan world of diverse cultures, some theorists argue that culture is a convergent phenomenon (Purohit, Simmers & Anakwe, 2003). The convergence of culture is the result of a shrinking world where exposure to dominant cultures force weaker cultures to convert (Purohit et al., 2003). If the convergence hypothesis is supported, then sensitivity to cultural differences in management training will systematically become irrelevant. Similarly using culture as a possible reason for differences in conflict management style will become inappropriate. Whether or not cultures across the globe are becoming more or less the same will need to be empirically confirmed.

As a broad classification system, frameworks that look at culture are poor predictors of performance (Easterbrook et al., 1993). The factorial structure of the dimensions of culture (as defined by Hofstede in 1984) and the manner in which it relates to effective conflict management has been questioned (Barki & Hartwick, 2001). It is clear that the handling of conflict does differ significantly between cultures but using such a broad denominator such as culture within an analysis that focuses on the monetary outcomes of conflict will complicate the process. It is necessary for future studies to investigate the link between cross cultural conflict and positive and negative performance outcomes.

Societal norms on a meso-level refer to the history of the conflict episode because the history of conflict gives rise to what is considered effective and acceptable ways of expressing conflict. The effects of cultural variables may influence the default attitude with which an individual approaches conflict scenarios, how an individual perceives the situation,

what outcomes he sees as acceptable and the range of responses available to him/her (Kaushal & Kwantes, 2006).

Conflict levels can rise to such an extent that trust and joint-problem solving can never be re-established if individuals with conflicting conflict resolution styles (eg. an Avoiding conflict management style is confronted with a Competing conflict management style) enter into a dispute. The increase in diversity and the pressure to perform against global competitors add urgency to the effective management of disputes.

Jehn (1997) refers to meso-level conflict related social norms as “acceptability norms”. Supportive acceptability norms encourage members to openly discuss and work through conflict. The type of conflict determines the acceptability norms associated with the expression of manifest conflict. Jehn (1997) found that norms that encourage perceptions that “this is not the time and place for”, the expression of relationship conflict and norms that encourage the expression of task and process conflict was the most beneficial for performance. The sample was however western-dominant.

Using the convergence hypothesis it can be argued that South Africa is sufficiently Westernised to have the same acceptability norms as expressed by Jehn (1997). This theory must still be confirmed.

The restrictive conditions conducive to so-called “productive conflict” have been documented by theorists mentioned within an article by Jehn (1997). Within this article it is mentioned that conflict has a tendency to mutate due to the effect of emotions on subjective interpretations of reality. The importance of subjective perceptions in the conflict process makes emotions a key element determining whether manifest conflict will be displayed.

Conflict is associated with stress and consequently most individuals see it as a threat. Jehn (1997) mentions that negative emotionality is often a response to perceived conflict, irrespective of the source or the type of conflict that comes into focus. Negative emotions, in turn, taint perceptions of reality.

If negative emotionality is directed at people and non-task related issues the conflict episode can increasingly become unconstructively disruptive. Being angry and hostile might lead others to become defensive or retaliate. This can be seen as a natural response to

something that the individual considers to be a threat (conflict is in general seen as a threat) (Jehn, 1997).

It can be argued that if the individual explains the reason for the emotional upheaval the disruptive effects of negative emotionality can be countered; by simply adding that you are not “angry at the person but at the situation” changes the conflict dynamics to become less threatening. Intense expressions of emotion on the other hand, detract from cognitive processing and effective task performance.

The problem is that few people have the ability to clearly express emotions associated with conflict while specifying the source of the frustration. Sometimes lashing out is an automated response to frustration regardless of the source of the frustration or the target.

Jehn (1997) found that negative emotionality was associated with reduced performance in task related, process related and relationship focussed conflict. These findings suggest that negative emotions moderated the perception of conflict, spilling over into the expression of conflict (Manifest conflict) which in turn reinforced the negative emotions and eventually caused a drop in performance. Where negative emotions were not associated with the conflict episode (there is the possibility that conflict can be associated with excitement and vigour) performance was not negatively affected by emotions.

The importance of the outcome of the conflict episode also moderated the expression of conflict and the performance of the parties involved (Jehn, 1997). It seems likely that if the outcome of the conflict situation is important for the individual or the group to achieve a perceived goal, more effort will be invested in finding an appropriate solution. Jehn (1997) concludes that it is important to create the mutual understanding that relationship focussed conflict (possibly having only destructive outcomes) is not important in achieving performance goals. Task related and process related conflict on the other hand should be resolved in order to achieve performance goals. There is however the distinct possibility that unresolved relationship focussed conflict can interfere with other conflict sources and cause unwanted/unneeded friction.

In situations where one or more of the parties perceive conflict to be a win-lose encounter it can be argued that: the more important the outcome, the more invested the parties and the more fiercely they will compete to achieve a desired outcome.

Whether the importance of the outcome contributes to either adaptive or maladaptive responses it will be a contributing factor in motivating the need to express the conflict (Manifest conflict).

Jehn (1997) mentions that the “perceived resolution potential” of the conflict episode will also moderate the expression of conflict. The resolution potential of the conflict refers to the subjective perceptions that the conflict will end in some form of agreement. The availability of an effective grievance procedure and the perception of organisational justice contribute to positive perceptions of resolution potential (Wall and Callister, 1995). Other important considerations include the history of antagonism, potential risks/costs involved, status/power differences between the parties, ability to withdraw and negative emotional expressions (Wall and Callister, 1995; Pondy, 1967; Anstey, 2006). These considerations impact on the subjective perception that the conflict can be resolved in a constructive manner. Jehn (1997) found that positive perceptions of resolution potential contributed to constructive expressions of conflict. In turn, constructive expressions of conflict increased the potential to reach the performance increases promised by theories on constructive conflict.

The following figure summarises the findings by Jehn (1997). Possible hypothesis can be drawn in terms of the relationship between the different conflict sources and performance when the four generic moderators, negative emotionality, the importance of the outcome, acceptability norms and the perceived resolution potential are taken into account.




<b>Conflict source</b>	<b>The expression and experience of negative emotionality</b>	<b>Importance of the outcome for goal achievement</b>	<b>Acceptability norms that encourage open expression of conflict</b>	<b>Resolution potential</b>	<b>Performance curve</b>
Task focused conflict	Negative	Positive	Positive	Positive	Curvilinear 
Relationship focussed conflict	Negative	Negative	Negative	Positive	Linear 
Process conflict	Negative	Unknown	Positive	Positive	Concave 

Figure 2.3. Findings by Jehn (1997) and possible performance curves

It is postulated that task focussed conflict will show a curvilinear relationship with performance if negative emotionality is low, the importance of the outcome is high, acceptability norms encourage the expression of conflict and the resolution potential is high.

It can also be theorised that process focussed conflict will show a concave relationship with performance if negative emotionality is low, the importance of the outcome is high, acceptability norms encourage the expression of conflict and the resolution potential is high.

Jehn (1997) theorises that relationship focussed conflict will always show a negative linear relationship with performance. The slope will increase if negative emotionality is high, the importance of the outcome is high, acceptability norms encourage the expression of conflict and the resolution potential is low.

The generic moderators drawn from the research done by Jehn (1997) focus specifically on task, process and relationship based conflict but it seems likely that these moderators will also be present in models that do not include these specific sources of conflict. Models such as the bargaining model will likely also be influenced by negative emotionality, the

importance of the outcome, the perceived resolution potential of the conflict and acceptability norms; the bargaining model defines conflict as an occurrence between two opposing interest groups but representatives of these groups still need to engage in negotiations and will therefore be exposed to these moderating influences when deciding a course of action. Additionally the group itself can become a social entity that spreads thoughts like a single organism. The concept of a “group identity” is however a controversial one.

Despite the generic moderators that can be applied to almost any conflict situation, specific moderators unique to the model under investigation can also be identified.

### 2.5.2 MODERATORS IN THE BARGAINING MODEL

The bargaining model investigates the conflicts that erupt between two opposing interest groups: employees and employers. Several factors moderate the source of frustration and the eventual expression of conflict. These sources might also be applicable to other models but should be mentioned separately in order to explain how specific chains of interaction impact manifest conflict.

Perceptions of legitimacy and feasibility moderate the relationship between conflict source and manifest conflict in the bargaining model. Legitimacy implies that the party perceives that they have the moral right to pursue a certain goal (Anstey, 2006). This “need for justice” stems from the perception that they are in some way the victims of unfairness. Their willingness to employ resources to achieve their goal depends in part on perceived feasibility. Feasibility is the perception of the opposing parties’ power relative to the party in question. Feasibility is therefore a concept many theorists would refer to as relative “power and authority”.

Corporate “fat-cats” are used as justification (legitimacy) to motivate the demands of labour in many negotiating procedures. According to Stats SA in 2000 the poorest 20% of households accounted for 2.8% of total expenditure. In contrast, the wealthiest 20% of households accounted for 64.5% of all expenditure in 2000. The Gini coefficient, another widely used measure of inequality, was 0.59 in 2000, which is a very high rating. It is therefore not surprising that employees in the lower salary levels look at employees in the higher salary levels and feel cheated.



Efforts by management to suppress union/ labour demands are supported by South African economic realities: a large pool of unskilled and willing labour to “replace” opposing employees and the unfortunate “unprotected” status of part-time employees under labour law. The reality of these conditions decreases the feasibility of pursuing ambitious demands. In some cases the reality of pursuing moderate demands are also frustrated by an imbalance in power between management and employees. In these cases negotiating procedures are likely to end in either emotional upheavals or learnt helplessness and labour depression.

The balance of power cannot be discussed without direct reference to the effects of continuous change: where change causes a phase of transition, ambiguity and distorted expectations give rise to new perceptions of relative power. The subjective nature of these distorted perceptions increases the potential for conflict. Conflict, in an environment that is already unstable, can be very damaging because the focus is placed on internal discrepancies and not adjusted to external demands.

Perceptions of legitimacy interact with another mediator, namely “history of relations”: if a union managed to get a 20% increase in wages in one year, members expect a similar increase the consecutive year (Anstey, 2006). The economic realities associated with exuberant increases might not be understood by members even though it is understood by management and by trade union representatives as unfeasible in the long term. This places pressure on the trade union representatives to make overly-optimistic demands while employers might feel that they have already addressed the wage gap in the previous year and that they have the legitimate right to refuse union demands for another increase. Management expects union demands to be more reasonable but their expectations are unmet, which in turn serves to reinforce the history perception that employees are ungrateful and never satisfied (a source of conflict). The history of relations and perceptions of legitimacy interact to create what Anstey (2006) calls a “crisis of expectations”.

History of relations also refers to the positive or negative spirals created with successful or bitter and strenuous conflict episodes. The history of the resolution of conflict is directly related to the development of trust (trust develops through experience). Positive spirals increase both parties’ confidence in the likelihood of a peaceful resolution; trust builds as flexible systems thinking is reinforced. Trust decreases when a negative spiral is activated;

zero-sum perspectives and closed minded discussions further exasperate conflict situations leading to disruptive outcomes as the parties use power tactics to pressure the other into submission.

The interpersonal history of the representatives can also be a mediating factor. Interpersonal disputes combined with power can transform private dislikes into organisational conflicts. It is natural to want to place a face next to a threat; it makes the threat tangible and therefore manageable but there is the real danger of pointing guns at the wrong people or for the wrong reasons. The employment-employee relationship is therefore subject to interpersonal grudges due to the fact that conflict involves interpersonal interaction. The destructive nature of relationship-conflict and the tendency for other forms of conflict (procedural and task conflict, typically a topic of discussion in negotiations) to transform into emotive relationship conflict should also be mentioned.

### 2.5.3 MODERATORS IN THE SYSTEMS MODEL

Several of the moderators that are applicable in the Employment Relationship are important with regards to interpersonal conflict:

Interpersonal interaction automatically makes the conflict history between the two individuals a point of concern. A history of negative interaction leads to expectations of disruptive manifest conflict. When an individual expects to be confronted with actions that are designed to frustrate his/her goal achievement there exists an incentive to preemptively strike with similarly destructive actions. Ideally grudges are not meant to be kept but in the real world slights are seldom forgotten and conflict can erupt over the smallest of details.

A positive history of conflict interaction on the other hand creates a positive cycle that increases the perception that conflict can effectively be resolved (resolution potential). It is in the interest of the long term working relationship of the individuals involved as well as the productivity of the company to ensure that interpersonal conflicts are constructively resolved in order to foster positive conflict cycles.

Where positive conflict cycles are the norm, trust develops and conflict can be used in a constructive manner to engage in lively problem solving. When negative conflict cycles become "normal" individuals are placed under considerable psychological strain.

Psychological strain is the combined effect of multiple and long lasting emotions associated with undesirable external situation. Negative conflict cycles increase the perception that negative emotions will be aroused, contributing to psychological strain. Wofford and Daly (1997) use the term “Psychological Magnification” to describe the tendency for negative stimuli to activate similar negative thought processes. Psychological Magnification is a powerful occurrence in interpersonal conflict because the perception of negative stimuli (felt conflict or manifest conflict) activates cognitive processes such as worry, rumination and escalation which in turn intensify the psychological strain felt by the individual.

Psychological strain can be the result of felt conflict (Pondy, 1967); the extent to which an individual feels stress, frustration, anger and/or anxiety due to perceived conflict sources. Continued exposure to emotion-arousing events will increase the likelihood of an overt behavioural response (Spector & Fox, 2002). In this sense it seems likely that psychological strain is a mediator in the conflict process because it serves as a psychological mechanism to induce action.

Psychological strain relates directly to a previously mentioned moderator, “perceived importance”. The individual will only act on the perceived source of conflict if he/she perceives the conflict to be a significant enough factor contributing to potential goal obstruction. Because the experience of stress is moderated by individual differences, not all individuals will experience stress to the same degree or in the same way when a stressor is active. The perceived importance of the conflict is therefore subject to personal appraisal.

When the conflict is perceived as important the outcome of the conflict episode becomes crucial and the individual experiences stress. Stress can then be seen as an anxiety provoking emotion that induces action by activating the fight-or-flight nervous system response in the individual (Anderson, 1976). The emotion associated with the perceived stressor will moderate the choice in expression of conflict. Therefore emotion mediates the effects of environmental conditions on behaviour.

Multiple factors contribute to the transformation of stress (short term and situation specific) into psychological strain (long term and spills over across situations). In general psychological strain can be seen as the inability of an individual’s coping mechanisms to deal constrictively with the perceived stressors in his/her environment (Parasuraman & Alutto,

1984). Long term negative emotions and the continued exposure to emotionally arousing events will therefore increase the likelihood of overt and disruptive manifest conflict.

Perceptions of legitimacy and feasibility have been discussed in detail in the previous section but are equally relevant within the systems model of interpersonal conflict. Samaha, Palmatier and Dant (2011) state that “people will go out of their way to punish actions that they perceive as unfair, even at cost to themselves” (p. 99). This is a form of “normative reasoning”. Normative reasoning involves the cognitive processes focussed upon doing the “proper” (moral, ethical or fair) thing (Thomas, 1992). It can therefore be said that perceptions of unfairness (legitimacy in cause) moderates the relationship between the perception of a conflict stressor and the manifestation of conflict.

It is however unrealistic to assume that every “just cause” will be acted upon. Louis, Taylor and Douglas (2005) stress the fact that individuals also make rational choices and engage in cost-benefit analysis when deciding on how to act in conflict situations. Thomas (1992) names this form of reasoning “instrumental reasoning” because it involves the rational choice of an action that the individual perceives will result in the most beneficial outcome. The “feasibility” of benefitting from acting upon a perceived imbalance will determine whether the individual will engage in manifest conflict. Granted it seems unlikely that a purely rational process will be followed when emotions are amplified and when time is limited; it does seem likely that individuals will adapt their conflict response (whether it is avoiding the conflict or openly confronting the elephant in the room) based on perceptions of legitimacy and feasibility.

Literature is ripe with studies investigating the relationship between conflict resolution styles (manifest conflict) and personality variables. These variables are numerous including trait anger, trait anxiety, neuroticism, extraversion, narcissism, agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional intelligence and self-perceptions (Penny & Spector, 2002; Marcus & Schuler, 2004; Berry, Ones & Sackett, 2007; Milam, Spitzmueller & Penny, 2009; Lee, Ashton & Shin, 2005; Kaushal & Kwantes, 2006). This study will name a few of the most often cited variables but it is noted that many other personality variables may also be of concern.

The *emotional stability* of the individual will likely be a good indication of his/her ability to handle significant amounts of ambiguity and interact with a fast pace and competitive

environment in a constructive and productive manner. Individuals who score high on measures of Neuroticism/emotional stability (using NEO) experience significantly more psychological strain than more emotionally stable counterparts (Dijkstra, Dierendonck, Evers & Dreu, 2004). It is likely that the emotional stability of the parties in the conflict situation bi-directionally influence the degree of felt conflict the parties are exposed to. Johnson (2003) links the emotional stability of the individual to irritability, sense of security and emotional responses. Less emotionally stable parties might perceive more conflict and evaluate the conflict as more threatening (Johnson, 2003). The resulting perception is one that evaluates the opposition as a significant threat to goal achievement and sets the scene for destructive conflict manifestation.

Related to emotional stability is the concept of *Emotional Intelligence*. Emotional intelligence is “the ability to be aware of one’s own feelings, be aware of other’s feelings, to differentiate among them and to use the information to guide one’s own thinking and behaviour” (Rahim, Psenicka, Polychroniou & Zhao, 2002, p. 303). Two distinct categories of emotional intelligence are interpersonal intelligence (i.e. the ability to understand the emotions of others) and intrapersonal intelligence (i.e. the ability to understand one’s own emotions) (Rahim et al., 2002). These two dimensions are intricately linked to the use of conflict-handling strategies because emotion forms one of the core facets of conflict.

The evaluation and expression of conflict, the regulation of emotions and the ability to effectively use emotions in decision-making can improve an individual’s ability to choose an appropriate conflict resolution strategy and effectively implement it to maximise the positive outcomes associated with conflict. Rahim et al., (2002) suggest that employees who are more emotionally intelligent will be more able to negotiate and effectively handle conflict situations.

*Agreeableness* is a characteristic that is associated with the active seeking of “good” outcomes for oneself and for others (a win-win orientation). It can be seen as a personality attribute that is strongly related to “pro-social motives” (Dijkstra et al., 2004). The reoccurring preference in thought patterns that drive behaviour that is warm, close and communicative results in individuals who are trusting, supportive, co-operative and altruistic (Dijkstra et al., 2004). Individuals who are low in agreeableness are typically seen as antagonistic, competitive, cynical and callous (Dijkstra et al., 2004). Due to their

insensitivity towards others, individuals who are low in agreeableness tend to express conflict in a hostile and confrontational manner. They also experience more conflict because they tend to be “socially cynical” and expect others to behave in a similarly antagonistic fashion (Dijkstra et al., 2004). In contrast, individuals who are high in the trait agreeableness tend to smooth over conflicts or ignore the reality of differing opinions and goals in order to “keep the peace”

Dijkstra et al. (2004) found that individuals who score low on agreeableness experience conflict more often and more negatively than their agreeable counterparts. The personality attribute “agreeableness” therefore affects the negative emotionality associated with the conflict source. Intensified negative emotionality contributes to experiences of psychological strain. The choice to engage in destructive manifest conflict becomes more likely.

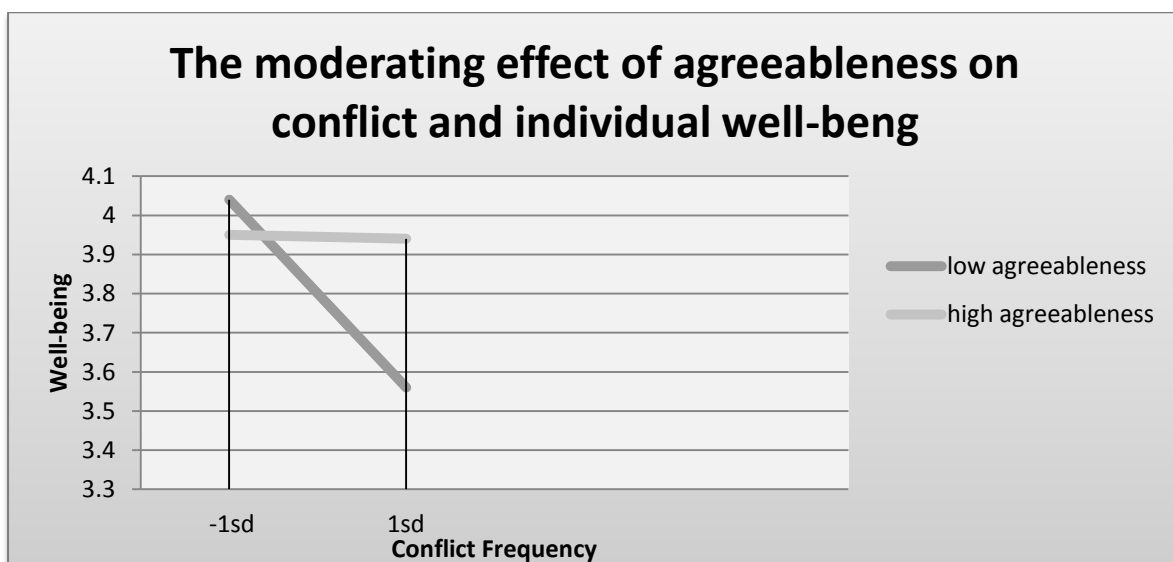


Figure 2.4. The moderating effect of agreeableness on the relationship between conflict and individual well-being (Dijkstra et al., 2004, p. 92)

Dijkstra et al. (2004) also investigated the effects of *extroversion* and *neuroticism* as moderating variables in the conflict episode with specific emphasis on psychological strain and well-being. They found similar results with extroverted individuals experiencing less psychological strain than their introverted counterparts and emotionally less stable individuals experiencing more psychological strain and less well-being than their emotionally stable counterparts.

Situations filtered through personal appraisals affect the likelihood than an individual will choose a certain course of action (Spector & Fox, 2002). Personality variables affect an individual's disposition towards a certain way of thinking. As personality variables are intricately perceptions it is likely that personality plays an important role in the interpersonal conflict process.

#### 2.5.4 MODERATORS IN THE BUREAUCRATIC MODEL

The superior-subordinate dyad seems to link elements from the systems model and elements from the bargaining model in a conflict process that involves two seemingly competing parties and significant amounts of personal interaction.

It would therefore be likely that the moderating variables that overlap with the bargaining model and the systems model would also be present in the bureaucratic model:

The interpersonal history between the parties will contribute to either positive or negative interaction spirals that will in turn affect the trust between the parties. The degree of trust will determine whether a win-lose mentality will be adopted; pre-emptive strikes and backhanded destructive conflict attempts are more likely in situations where trust has been damaged.

The psychological strain felt by the parties will also contribute to the choice in conflict resolution strategy. Depending on the personality of the individual (attributes such as Emotional Intelligence influence a high or low tolerance for stress) psychological strain will encourage the individual to act upon the source of conflict (Johnson & Indvik, 1999; Slaski & Cartwright, 2002). Minimal stress and psychological strain will convince the individual to think of the source of conflict as irrelevant or trivial and the perceived conflict / felt conflict will not progress to manifest conflict.

The power imbalance in the superior-subordinate relationship has been discussed in the previous section. Due to the inherent power imbalance, perceptions of legitimacy and feasibility become a focal point.

The legitimacy and feasibility of the perceived source of conflict can be seen as a moderator variable determining the display of manifest conflict. If the individual perceives the perceived source of conflict as legitimate (e.g. a perceived misuse of power) but the means to achieve successful conflict resolution unlikely (e.g. a biased grievance system in favour of

management) the chances of the individual displaying overt manifest conflict decreases. There is however the distinct possibility that covert displays of conflict will be used to either display dissatisfaction or re-establish the balance (according to the principles of equity theory).

A unique source of conflict in the bureaucratic model is differing expectations with regards to control. It is normal and expected for superiors and subordinates to differ with regards to what they perceive to be their legitimate sphere of autonomy. Depending on the personality of the individual, person-to-person differences in expected autonomy are also likely.

Expectations of control relate directly to role expectations. Personal role expectations and the degree to which an individual is aware of the role expectations of others will determine his/her perception of legitimate control. The degree to which the individual accepts these role expectations and clearly communicates them will establish whether or not expectations of control are matched between superior and subordinate.

Clear two-way communication enables the parties to establish mutual control expectations by clearly defining role expectations. Poor communication can therefore be seen as a moderator that can aggravate possible perceived sources of "control misuse".

If psychological strain reaches a pronounced level, the perceived sources of conflict will become significant enough to the individual that he/she will act on them to alleviate some of the pressure. Constructive manifest conflict becomes a type of pressure valve. Destructive manifest conflict aggravates the situation to a point where irreparable damage is done to interpersonal working relationships.

Conflict is an everlasting struggle to achieve equilibrium (Chen et al., 2005). Conflict highlights perceived imbalances and conflict itself inevitably disturbs the emotional equilibrium of the organisation. Mechanisms, whether they are functional or dysfunctional, are employed to restore the balance.

## 2.6 MANIFEST CONFLICT

Manifest conflict can be seen as an expression of dissatisfaction in order to manage the frustration caused by denied interests.



Many theorists have attempted to classify the way in which individuals respond to conflict. General response tendencies have been identified and referred to as “conflict styles”.

In this section, expressions of manifest conflict are not singled out but general tendencies will be referred to. These tendencies are called “conflict styles”.

There are many conflict styles with which an individual can oppose a perceived source of conflict, some of which are constructive and some of which are destructive. Outcomes of the conflict action (constructive or destructive) will, to a degree, depend on situational constraints imposed by conflict circumstances. It is questionable whether or not an individual can always make a rational decision to adopt a conflict strategy to appropriately address conflict (make a strategic choice). Based on the knowledge that most of the facets of conflict are subject to inaccurate perceptions and the fact that emotions form an unavoidable part of the conflict process, it seems equally likely that conflict strategies may be a default reaction to perceived imbalances. Kaushal and Kwantes (2006) state that even though manifest conflict may be a “strategic choice” it is still based on anticipated results which in turn is shaped by imprecise predetermined factors like culture and perceptions of feasibility.

Many theorists like Kaushal and Kwantes (2006) feel that it is more realistic to assume that individuals harbour a specific preference for a given style based upon non-evaluative response tendencies (Moberg, 2001). In this sense, conflict style is a trait (Moberg, 2001). Conflict style can, however, also be conceptualised as a cognitive evaluation based on past experiences and expectations for a favourable outcome (Moberg, 2001; Holt & DeVore, 2005). Moberg (2001, p. 52) states that choice in strategy depends on “the extent to which a strategy is believed capable of achieving a desired goal and the anticipated costs of enacting the strategy” (perceptions of feasibility).

It is not clear whether cognitive style is a non-evaluative or evaluative response. It may very well be that conflict style is non-evaluative when certain environmental constraints are imposed (e.g. time constraints, high levels of stress and high levels of ambiguity) and evaluative when the environment is a “conflict-safe” zone. A “conflict-safe” environment implies that the culture in which conflict erupts embraces conflict as a constructive process that can be managed in order to achieve a “win-win” outcome. Constructive outcomes of conflict are discussed in the next section.

There are various taxonomies with which to classify conflict response styles: Hall's Conflict Management Survey (CMS), Rahim's Organisational Conflict Inventories I and II (ROCI-I and ROCI-II) and Renwick's Employee Conflict Inventory (ECI) (Holt & DeVore, 2005; Thomas, 1992). The most accepted and most extensively researched taxonomy is used in Thomas and Kilmann's Management-of-differences exercise (MODE). The number of potential strategies for conflict resolution range from 4 to 17 (Kaushal & Kwantes, 2006).

The labels for the various conflict styles differ across the instruments but the basic principles of many of the instruments are very similar.

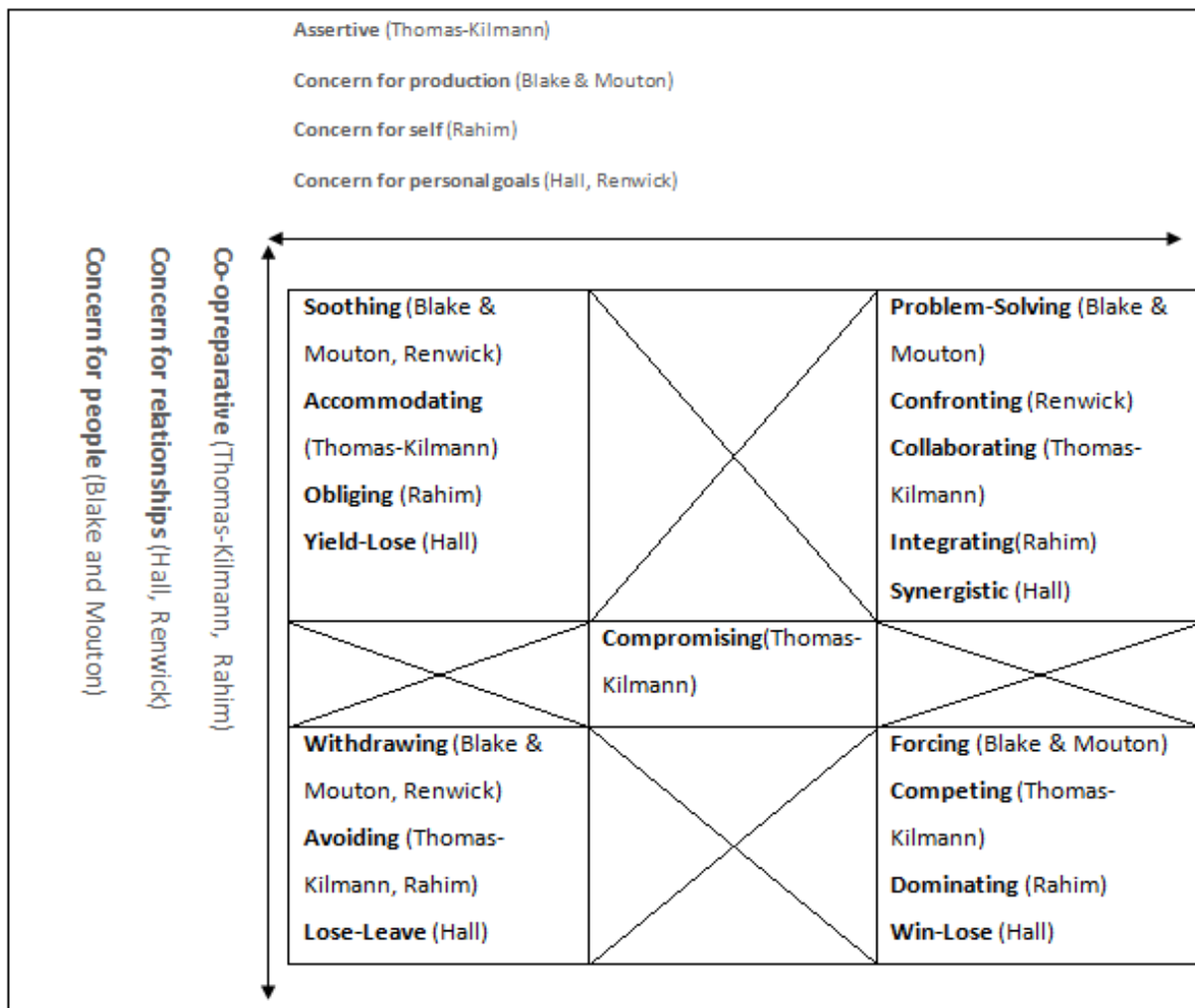


Figure 2.5. Overlay of conflict resolution styles and authors adapted from Holt and DeVore (2005)

Mode classifies conflict style according to relative standing on two dimensions: *cooperation and assertiveness* (Purohit & Simmers, 2006; Swanepoel et al., 1999). *Cooperation* refers to the extent to which a person attempts to satisfy the concerns of the other party in the

conflict situation (Purohit & Simmers, 2006; Swanepoel et al., 1999). *Assertiveness* refers to the extent to which one attempts to satisfy one's own interests (Purohit & Simmers, 2006; Swanepoel et al., 1999).

Various combinations of the two dimensions result in five conflict styles or modes. Modes are best described as generic categories of intentions or strategies at solving conflict (Thomas, 1992). The modes are simple distinctions between possible conflict resolution options that can be used by either of the parties involved. This definition implies that the choice in mode is an evaluative response.

Each mode has its own benefits and drawbacks:

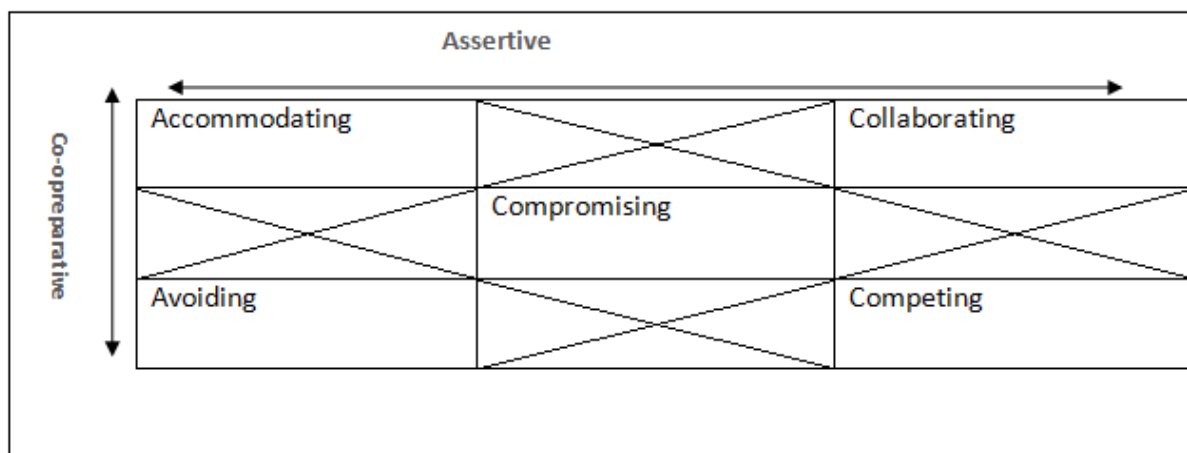


Figure 2.6. Thomas-Kilmann's conflict mode instrument (Swanepoel et al., 1999)

*Collaborating* or *joint-problem-solving* is a combination of highly assertive and highly co-operative behaviours. Open communication channels and a commitment to sharing information produces a "win-win" approach to problem solving where both parties are committed to finding a solution that best suits all involved parties (Xie et al, 1998; Purohit & Simmers, 2006; Swanepoel et al., 1999). Diverse skills are integrated and decision-making is optimised. Thomas (1992) mentions that this mode of conflict resolution produces superior results for all parties involved. He mentions higher levels of self-esteem and satisfaction, trust, respect and affiliation as well as superior decision-making as a result of this mode of conflict resolution (Thomas, 1992). He does, however, also state that collaboration is more often than not "naïve and impractical" (Thomas, 1992, p. 271). Collaboration as a mode of conflict resolution is an ideal that is rarely achieved because it loses its effectiveness when conflict levels rise (Xie et al, 1998). This does not mean that it is foolish to strive for the

ideal. As a long term initiative, collaboration does have many benefits: as trust builds and time and dedication to finding a joint resolution grows, collaboration might very well be an option.

The *competitive* style is highly assertive and minimally co-operative. Individuals who prefer this mode are more likely to force their own interests at the expense of the interests of others (Swanepoel et al., 1999; Purohit & Simmers, 2006). This style has been associated with authoritative leadership and power motives (Swanepoel et al., 1999). Even though agreement is not a requirement for this form of conflict resolution, efficient decisions can be made (Xie et al, 1998). According to Swanepoel et al. (1999) this style can be effective when fast decisions need to be made or important decisions with a possibility of an unpopular outcome are unavoidable. This mode does, however, create “winners and losers” and emotional responses can be negative (Xie et al, 1998).

The *compromising* style is characterised by moderate levels of assertiveness and co-operation. This mode is characterised by the desire to accommodate both parties: each party involved gives up something in order to gain something of more importance (Purohit & Simmers, 2006). A 50-50 approach only results in good decision-making if the parties involved cannot find a solution using collaboration, have equal power and medium-interest goals (Swanepoel et al., 1999).

*Accommodation or Soothing* is a style that is characterised by a desire to please the other party and co-operate to find a solution (Purohit & Simmers, 2006). This style is essentially the opposite of the competitive style (Swanepoel et al., 1999). An individual with this conflict style has a tendency to be perceived as a “push-over” because of the measure of “self-sacrifice” they are willing to make (Swanepoel et al., 1999). An accommodating style is beneficial to use when the individual wishes to establish creditworthiness, right a wrongdoing or when the matter is significantly more important to the other party involved (Swanepoel et al., 1999). If this approach is used outside of these conditions it can result in one-sided decision-making, a loss of information and a loss of respect and trust (Xie et al, 1998).

*Avoidance* involves behaviours that are both low in assertiveness and low in co-operation. This style is used by individuals who feel that conflict is a waste of time and energy and always results in negative outcomes (Purohit & Simmers, 2006). This mode can be seen as a

flight response while competing can be seen as a fight response to conflict. In some instances, an avoiding-response is helpful; when time pressures are of such a nature that the conflict will need to be postponed until both parties can pay attention to the situation or when emotions have escalated to a point where any attempt at conflict resolution would be unsuccessful (Swanepoel et al., 1999).

Even though the above-mentioned modes are each optimal in certain situations, individuals do not necessarily have the time or the skills to assess whether or not a specific approach is needed. Conflict management is therefore an essential part of any organisation: giving individuals the skills and the resources to effectively manage conflict is a fundamental component to be able to realise constructive conflict (at the very least to avoid the costly implications of destructive conflict).

It is not within the scope of this article to puzzle out why and how individuals choose to use a specific manifest conflict style. Therefore it is assumed that any style can be adopted by any party in any conflict situation - the specifics governing the choice remains to be explored by future research in this field.

Manifest conflict as a mechanism directly contributes to the profitability of the organisation by impacting on outcome variables like performance and company image:

Johnson (2003) accurately states that it is as important to have a “taxonomy of job performance as it is to have a taxonomy on the predictor side” (pp 88). Making use of a taxonomy of manifest conflict (Thomas-Killman’s model) makes little sense unless it can be meaningfully linked to outcome variables that have relevance to the organisation in terms of success.

Borman and Motowildlo (1993) are quoted by Johnson (2003) as having contributed a valuable taxonomy of performance; they define performance as a complex variable consisting to two broad dimensions - task performance and contextual performance. According to Behfar et al. (2008), Hackman and Morris developed three criteria for team viability that are similar to the taxonomy developed by Borman and Motowildlo (1993). They subdivide team success into performance (the team must meet the expectations of those that receive their work), satisfaction (team members must feel like their own needs are satisfied) and flexibility (the ability of the team to adapt its processes so that it can work

together in the future). Pondy (1967) summarises the economic effects of conflict on a broader level of analysis - the organisation by classifying the outcomes of conflict as having effects on three distinct organisational success functions: productivity, stability and flexibility.

On the individual level, group level and organisation level of analysis the constructs that theorists have identified as successful performance are very similar. Due to the similarity in constructs a discussion of the Borman and Motowildlo (1993) model is deemed sufficient:

Task performance refers to: activities that have a direct effect on output by limiting or encouraging the efficient functioning of the core business. Johnson (2003) lists task performance elements such as technical proficiency, effective decision making, speedy problem solving, written and oral communication proficiency, coordinating resources and training and development success.

Contextual performance refers to activities that support the broader environment in which the core business must function. Behaviours such as OCB (Organisational Citizenship Behaviour), cooperating with others and following rules and procedures would be classified as contextual performance elements.

Johnson (2003) quotes a study by Borman, Buck et al. (2001) that refined the elements of contextual performance by looking at twenty-three hundred examples of citizenship behaviour and categorising them according to mutual elements (pp. 90). On page 90 the following labels are highlighted:

- **Personal support:** behaviours benefitting individuals in the organisation: includes helping, motivating, cooperating with, and showing consideration of others.
- **Organisational support:** behaviours benefitting the organisation: includes representing the organisation favourably, showing loyalty, and complying with organisational rules and procedures.
- **Conscientious initiative:** behaviours benefitting the job or the task: includes persisting with extra effort to complete tasks, taking initiative, and engaging in self-development activities.

Johnson (2003) adds a third division of performance called Adaptive performance. Adaptive performance refers to the ability to deal effectively with uncertain and unpredictable work

situations and adjust activities to suit changing needs. He includes this dimension as a separate performance dimension due to increasingly dynamic work environments that necessitate flexibility.

Several other basic mechanisms are available for classifying the different outcomes of conflict into meaningful groups. On the most basic level conflict can either have constructive or destructive outcomes.

## 2.7 OUTCOMES OF CONFLICT

Literature reports that conflict is a force of change that can either have positive or negative consequences depending on the manner in which it is managed (Pondy, 1967, Kaushal & Kwantes, 2006; De Dreu, 2008; De Dreu & Weingart, 2003; Hinds & Bailey, 2003; Anstey, 2006; Chen et al., 2005). This is consistent with the concept that conflict is a social phenomenon with diverse consequences.

### 2.7.1 PRODUCTIVE AND FUNCTIONAL OUTCOMES OF CONFLICT

The positive effects of conflict have recently come into focus. Most research in this area investigates the conditions under which win-win agreements can be reached (De Dreu, 2008; Chen et al., 2005).

Similar conclusions are reached: the conflict should be task related, of moderate intensity and within a psychologically safe environment (Chen et al., 2005). Additionally both parties should perceive the current state of affairs to be suboptimal (De Dreu, 2008). These conditions are not impossible to establish but they are clearly more difficult than theorists would imply. More often than not the difficulty is only acknowledged as a small part of the implications of the research project. Research promises that constructive controversy will lead to increased self efficacy, satisfaction, productivity, motivation, social harmony and lower chances of future conflict (De Dreu, 2008).

Possible interventions to increase the chances of establishing favourable conditions include increasing goal congruence, insight into cognitive errors, deepened understanding of colleagues, creative solutions to problems and the encouragement of careful information processing through open two way communication (De Dreu, 2008; Chen et al., 2005; Monash University, 2012). Better decision making and optimal team functioning is a

possible result but under conditions where there is little time to discuss the conflict, where the conflict is relationship focussed or becomes relationship focussed and/or when the tasks are simple and routine, no amount of careful conflict management will make the outcomes of the conflict episode positive. Learning from past mistakes seems to be the only one that comes to mind.

Additionally it seems unclear whether or not these favourable conditions contribute to the bottom line via constructive controversy or simply mitigate the negative effects of conflict. In the end these conditions might just end up neutralising a potentially destructive situation (De Dreu, 2008). This uncertainty is a serious shortcoming in research – an uncertainty that future researchers are encouraged to investigate. Until this uncertainty is resolved this paper will continue under the assumption that under the right conditions constructive controversy is a possibility.

Anstey (2006) mentions that conflict may be a positive vehicle for progressive social change by challenging the status quo and encouraging adaption and flexibility by changing structures, values and systems. Conflict may also serve as an in-group stability factor by encouraging the philosophy that “the enemy of my enemy is my friend”, making the out-group the target of misplaced frustration with in-group irritations. Ironically a certain degree of conflict is necessary to encourage a type of “stability” and an “appreciation for change and learning”.

When taking these impacts into account, conflict can be dysfunctional or functional depending on the external environment and the maturity of the organisation. Conflict can cause an increase in flexibility by encouraging perceptual awareness and the re-evaluation of systems and processes that can, in turn, help an organisation to adapt to environmental pressures. This is beneficial to an organisation in a highly competitive environment. Even more so if the organisation is fairly new or in need of Organisational Development (OD) interventions. But mature organisations that are performing well might be less in need of flexibility than in need of stability and productivity.

Generally theorists assume that “where conflict is perceived, a motivation to reduce conflict is generated” (Pondy, 1967). Conflict disturbs the equilibrium of the organisation, unit or functioning dyad. The unit will then be motivated to restore equilibrium (using the principles of equity theory) by engaging in various activities that will have an impact on



success related criteria. An example would be if the individual would choose to respond to conflict by leaving the organisation for a less “toxic culture”. The withdrawal behaviour of the individual would then contribute to volatility, stimulating a need to search for a new candidate. The organisation will have an opportunity to procure fresh talent but the expenses associated with a candidate search might not be worthwhile - especially if there is a high turnover rate indicative of a systematic talent drain.

Typical reactions to restore the equilibrium are either withdrawing from the relationship or the situation (turnover, presenteeism, absenteeism, decreased productivity) and/or procuring increased incentives to compensation for the conflict (Counter Productive Workplace Behaviour like theft, sabotage, under-commitment, misuse of information).

A less frequent reaction is to resolve the conflict within the context of the relationship; allowing the expression of dissatisfaction so that the relationship can be stabilised and modified to obtain mutually advantageous results without causing psychological strain. One might refer to this reaction as a “mature” response to a volatile and potentially harmful social situation. Maturity does not refer to the individual alone; of more prominent concern is the social situation in which the conflict episode unfolds.

The “mature” situation allows for the expression of dissatisfaction; hereafter the grievance is taken seriously and purposefully attended to. The individual will lose faith in the efficiency of the system if dissatisfaction was negatively reacted to or if the individual was encouraged to suppress powerful emotions related to a perceived unfair state/latent conflict conditions (Anstey, 2006). All too frequently there is an “us-them” mentality (possibly a tragic social remnant of the Apartheid history). Attempts at creating a norm of tolerance and understanding between groups are in many cases complicated by differences in perceptions of legitimacy; black individuals feel that the inequalities of the past should be corrected instantaneously while white individuals see these actions as a threat to the group’s identity, culture, language and rights. This has led many white South Africans to refer to BEE legislation as “reverse Apartheid”. The justification of these perceptions are not the focus of this paper - what is of concern is the fact that these perceptions differ and consequently create a setting in which tolerance is strained because both parties legitimately feel like they are threatened.

The effects of the history of the relationship are not limited to racial inequalities; vengeful and bitter negotiations due to perceptions of past injustices are frequently reported. In some of these cases negotiations have deteriorated to such a point that the parties are more interested in giving each other their “just desserts” than settling the issues in the dispute. Anstey (2006) reports a case where the union accused management of stealing produce to strengthen their case during wage negotiations. The accusations ended in a full blown investigation into the management team after which it was found that the union accused management of corruption because management accused the workers of the same transgression a year prior. The tactic most certainly cost the organisation a lot of money in terms of time and productivity. These expenses could have been avoided if the parties did not spend their time and effort on undermining each other but focussed on reaching a reasonable agreement.

Without a “mature” situation “mature” responses to an emotive social phenomenon such as conflict cannot be expected. Even though the use of the word “mature” is descriptive, the pervasive effects of perceptions can be better explained when using the term organisational occupational climate. In their study Cotton and Heart (2003) refer to the experience of organisational climate as the perceptions of the individual as to how the organisation functions. Their study revealed that occupational climate is the best predictor of low moral ( $r=0.46$ ) and an equally significant predictor of distress ( $r=-0.36$ ). An organisational climate loaded with negative effect due to ineffective conflict management practices will therefore play a key role in the negative and positive effect experienced by individuals.

As demonstrated by the examples, favourable outcomes to conflict situations depend on a set of equally favourable perceptions. Because a “mature” conflict situation is so rare, favourable perceptions and favourable outcomes are equally uncommon. Additionally some conflict theorists are of the opinion that few negative effects can overwhelm the cumulative effect of many positive outcomes conflict (Samaha et al., 2011; Barkl & Hartwick, 2001; Jehn & Chatman, 2000). The positive outcomes of conflict can be seen as a house of cards ready to tumble when a single card shifts out of place. Because the negative effects of conflict overshadow the possible positive effects the rest of this paper will focus on the disruptive outcomes of conflict.

## 2.7.2 DISRUPTIVE AND DYSFUNCTIONAL OUTCOMES OF CONFLICT

In some cases unhealthy conflict is seemingly non-existent because one of the parties just “gives in” or the conflict has turned into a “stale mate”, where each bides his/her time to strike back. Other times conflict is more apparent and two parties can end up manipulating and sabotaging the other’s attempts at goal attainment, frequently at the cost of company goals. For the emotionally attentive individual, subtle conflict can be easily spotted; it is commonly referred to as “tension” (Bobinski, 2006). In some instances conflict can be good but in almost all instances tension is bad. The reason might be that tension is often disregarded by the emotionally less aware as an inevitable consequence of doing business and once more, something that will soon “evaporate”. This stance cannot be less productive and more destructive to the management of conflict. The repercussions are destructive.

Due to the fact that conflict is not always clearly visible it is easy to dismiss latent conflict. In an article (Monash University, 2012) some signs that clearly point to the probable development of destructive conflict are listed.

- Gossip
- Avoidance
- Resistance to change
- Exclusion and information hoarding
- Absenteeism
- Silences and a drop in communication
- Negative body language
- Low levels of energy
- Complaining and petty arguments

It would not be surprising if most people can identify a situation in which some or most of these signs were present; this points to the prevalence of negative conflict in workplaces.

Investigating the disruptive outcomes of conflict can at first be overwhelming. The effects of conflict can be short and long term and it can vary greatly depending on individual circumstances and company culture. Some of the outcomes are:

- Excessive employee turnover
- Low morale, stress, frustration and anxiety

- Reduced productivity
- Faulty products and a decrease in service
- Reduced quality decisions
- Delayed /missed deadlines
- Wasted time and increased presenteeism
- Increased costs due to a need to increase supervision
- Increased stress that leads to absenteeism
- Reduced collaboration
- Fractionated activities and low levels of coordination that retard processes
- Passive –aggressive behaviour
- Abusive behaviour that might lead to legal action
- Damaged management credibility
- Damaged company image
- Decreased customer satisfaction
- Distrust
- Toxic culture
- Sabotage and theft
- Grievances and legal action
- Absenteeism and abuse of sick leave

(Barki & Hartwick, 2001; Behafar et al., 2008; Bobinski, 2006; Centre for Conflict Resolution International, 2012; Chang et al., 2009; Frone, 2000; Jehn, 1995; Jordaan, 2011; Monash University, 2012; Rowe, 1997; Samaha et al., 2011; Thomas, 2002)

It is unnerving to realise that these negative outcomes do not even form an exhaustive list!

The destructive outcomes related to conflict limit the possibility of realising constructive performance related outcomes to conflict. Distrust decreases the communication between individuals that might need to collaborate in order to solve problems. In this way communication is limiting the task performance of the team/dyad or department. In the same way a damaged company image will decrease the talent pool from which an organisation can attract talent. The organisation will then struggle to adapt to changing circumstances due to its inability to source the right skills. In this instance conflict damages

the adaptive performance of a company. A conflict ridden toxic culture as a result of distrust, low morale and passive aggressive behaviour will most likely erode any form of contextual performance like Organisational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB), loyalty or extra effort.

In order to conceptually organise the possible negative outcomes of destructive conflict, a taxonomy is needed with which outcomes can be meaningfully linked. Cram and MacWilliams (2012) suggest that these outcomes be categorised in terms of how easy they are to identify.

First-order effects refer to immediate effects of conflict. These are the direct outcomes of a poorly managed conflict episode. An example would be an employee who terminates his/her contract of employment. The costs of these effects are often easy to determine because the end result is clear. Costs could include termination costs, recruitment expenses and the training for a new hire.

- **Lost revenue** and **“Overtime”** as a result of missed deadlines, late deliveries, bad customer service and intentional miscommunication (Behafar et al., 2008; Bobinski, 2006).
- Employee **replacement costs** including termination costs, recruitment costs, part time employees etc. (Frone, 2000). Jordaan (2011) reports on a survey on leading fortune 500 companies that showed that 12% of employees changed jobs due to conflict in organisations.
- **Increased expenditure** resulting from quality problems, replacement orders, redundancy due to miscommunication, employee theft etc. (Rowe, 1997).
- **Legal action and CCMA settlements (time, money and reputation losses)** due to disgruntled employees or ex-employees exposed to unresolved conflict (Rowe, 1997).
- **“Time loss”** due to grievance procedures being overly used to resolve critical as well as petty conflicts (Barkl & Hartwick, 2001; Ford & Barnes-Slater, 2002; Bobinski, 2006).
- **Sabotage and theft** in order to “get back” at the company for making the employee angry (Centre for Conflict Resolution International, 2012).

Second-order effects are secondary effects to the conflict episode. Assessing the effects of socialisation and orientation on a new hire and determining how long it will take before that individual is productive is an example. Second-order effects are less clear-cut and therefore more difficult to give a price tag.

- **Absenteeism** due to conflict related stress and low employee morale (Chang et al., 2009; Samaha et al., 2011; Barkl & Hartwick, 2001; Frone, 2000; Bobinski, 2006). The emotional strain related with overt or covert conflict can overexert an employee's coping resources leading to ill employee health. Sick employees and employees who "just want to get away from things" form an ever growing cost when conflict becomes destructive in organisational settings.
- **Productivity loss** due to doing things other than work related activities (avoiding behaviour like playing computer games or confrontational behaviour like passive-aggressive fights) (Rowe, 1997; Jehn, 1995; Bobinski, 2006). The emotional strain associated with conflict decreases the cognitive resources available to the individual. These resources could otherwise have been invested in productive activities (Chang et al., 2009; Jehn, 1995). Barkl and Hartwick (2001) mention "foot dragging" as a consequence of unresolved conflict.

The previously mentioned survey on leading fortune 500 companies showed that 22% of employees stated that they decreased their work effort because of conflict, 50% indicated that they lost work time because of conflict (Jordaan, 2011). Chang, Rosen and Levy (2009) also mention that "organisation politics" is a "hindrance stressor" that prevents employees from being optimally productive.

- **"Ramp up" time** required before a new employee becomes productive (training costs and orientation time).
- **Loss in management time** due to increased supervision, mediating and distrust (Jordaan, 2011; Bobinski, 2006). The survey showed that managers spend on average 24% of their time at work resolving conflicts (Jordaan, 2011). Another article (Centre for Conflict Resolution International, 2012) reports an average of 42% of management time spent on resolving conflict.

Third-order effects are long term effects of conflict, some of which have become so entrenched in the culture of the organisation that it is impossible to quantify. Third-order

effects include a toxic culture and a bad reputation, two results that are often seen in organisations that have a history of long term unresolved conflict.

Lost business opportunities and market dominance, a shallow talent pool and a hostile working environment all contribute to seriously undermine business. Even though these effects are almost impossible to quantify they are true “business killers”. Third-order effects like strain resulting from a hostile working environment can in the long run have more direct effects on the organisation. A study by Chang, Rosen and Levy (2009) significantly links perceptions of organisational politics (covert conflict) with turnover intentions and a drop in productivity. These outcomes were mediated by strain and morale issues related to the perceived conflict.

- **Hostile working environment** due to e.g. passive-aggressive behaviour exhibited by disgruntled employees (Behafar et al., 2008). A hostile working environment is part of a negative cycle that encourages behaviour that is self-serving and threatening to the well-being of other employees (Behafar et al., 2008). These negative cycles are hard to change and should be avoided from developing in the first place.

The environment influences the employees’ overall assessment of the job; in time the employees start to consider the job as “the root of the problem” and their sense of obligation towards the organisation declines (Chang et al., 2009, p. 783; Frone, 2000). Withdrawing from the job and engaging in presenteeism is a possibility while leaving the company is another (Chang et al., 2009; Samaha et al., 2011; Barkl & Hartwick, 2001).

- **Loss of effective management initiatives** due to a loss in credibility because conflict is not resolved (management is seen as incompetent or uncaring) (Samaha et al., 2011; Barkl & Hartwick, 2001; Bobinski, 2006).
- **Miscommunication** resulting from confusion, sabotage and refusal to collaborate that in turn decreases flexibility and effectiveness (Samaha et al., 2011; Behafar et al., 2008; Jehn, 1995).
- **Poor company image** resulting in a loss in revenue caused by missed opportunities, shallow talent pool etc.

First order, second order and third order effects are possible outcomes of a conflict situation irrespective of the origin of the conflict or the nature of the relationship: an

employee might consider terminating his/her employment due to conflict with a supervisor or due to conflict with a co-worker; an employee might intentionally withhold information from management due to a ongoing trade union dispute with the organisation or he could decide to withhold information from a manager he/she dislikes.

The disruptive and dysfunctional outcomes of conflict are vast and can be costly to an organisation if not managed pro-actively. The conflict outcomes are summarised in Figure 2.8 (p. 61).

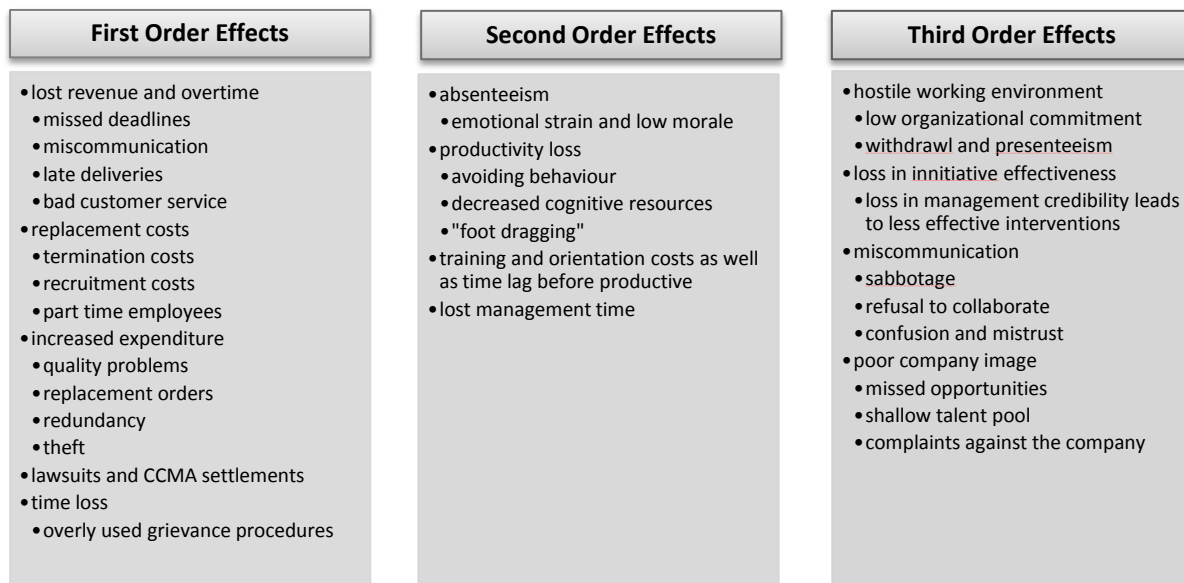


Figure 2.7. First order, second order and third order effects of conflict

Unfortunately pro-active conflict management strategies receive little to no recognition (Centre for Conflict Resolution International, 2012) in many businesses. A possible cause may be that conflict outcomes are difficult to measure and therefore seen by many practitioners as exceedingly difficult to manage.

First Order and Second Order effects of conflict like absenteeism and presenteeism, are more tangible than third order effects like a "hostile culture". This study will not attempt to calculate all of the outcomes of conflict, but an attempt is made to measure many of the First Order and Second Order effects of conflict. In this way it is hoped that the cost incurred due to conflict is of such a nature that the HR practitioner will be in a better position to motivate the need for pro-active conflict management strategies.



## 2.8 INDIVIDUAL RESPONSES TO CONFLICT

Individuals respond differently to similar conflict situations (Kaushal and Kwantes, 2006) based on past experiences, individual evaluations of the situation and a preferred conflict style. The manner in which conflict is addressed can determine if the situation will lead to “healthy conflict” or destructive conflict.

Bobinski (2006) accurately states that in “healthy conflict” issues are discussed with objective language and each party is empowered to state their position with confidence that the other party is genuinely a) listening b) wanting to understand and c) keeping an open mind. It is an easy process to “list the necessary elements for effective conflict resolution” but a completely different process to effectively implement. A wide range of possible activities focussed on increasing open two-way communication, joint problem-solving and increasing Emotional Intelligence (EQ) have been identified as effective conflict management interventions (Behafar et al., 2008; Monash University, 2012). But for many it is a too long and possibly demanding process. It is an impossible process if the need for effective conflict management is not understood. As a result, unhealthy conflict is common.

Most authors are of the opinion that if conflict can be effectively managed, the organisation will reap the benefits: increased creativity and innovation, better decision making, strategic thinking and increased performance and job satisfaction (Chen et al., 2005; Behafar et al., 2008; Jehn, 1997; Jehn, 1995; Hinds & Bailey, 2003; De Dreu & Weingart, 2003; Jehn, Northcraft, et al., 1999; Chen et al., 2005; Monash University, 2012). Few of these authors have instigated which management practices qualify as “effective”.

The most widely studied variable in the process is individual conflict management orientations/styles (when using the Thomas-Killmann’s model, types range from: Accommodating, Avoiding, Compromising, Collaborating and Competing) (see conflict frameworks page 8) and how these individual orientations can be altered to best suit the situation (Behafar et al., 2008).

These broad behavioural responses can be considered as part “predetermined” (structural aspects or pre-dispositions) and part “strategic choice” (procedural aspects or preferences given certain situational aspects) (Thomas, 1992; Hammer, 2005; Moberg, 2001; Cai & Fink, 2002; Holt & DeVore, 2005). It is not unrealistic to assume that individuals harbour a specific

preference for a given style based upon non-evaluative response tendencies especially since conflict is often a volatile and emotional experience (Moberg, 2001). In this sense, conflict style is a trait (Moberg, 2001). Conflict style can, however, also be conceptualised as a cognitive evaluation based on past experiences and expectations for a favourable outcome (Moberg, 2001; Holt & DeVore, 2005). Moberg (2001, p. 52) states that choice in strategy depends on “the extent to which a strategy is believed capable of achieving a desired goal and the anticipated costs of enacting the strategy”. In this case conflict style is an “interpretative frame” (Hammer, 2005, p. 678) with which an individual interprets and builds perceptions around perceived incompatibilities as well as manages the frustration caused by denied interests.

Predominantly authors see conflict style as a choice that can be modified even though it might be a lengthy and difficult process due to the fact that perceptions and cognitive frames play a big role in adopting a strategy. The success of the outcome depends on the compatibility between the source of the conflict and which styles are used by the individuals involved in the conflict process (Behafar et al., 2008).

In general, conflict theorists investigate the correlation between individual conflict management styles and constructive outcomes, but few have had the patience to longitudinally determine whether broad conflict management systems are effective in encouraging the use of effective conflict management styles. There is a serious lack of information regarding the effectiveness of conflict management over a period of time.

Broader management strategies (seen as conflict management) have loosely adopted the individual conflict handling style labels as a way to classify management orientations towards conflict. These general orientations towards conflict management have been linked to different success related factors. A main deterrent in the process is the source of the conflict; management strategies will vary in their effectiveness depending on whether the conflict is predominantly relationship, task or process focussed. For example, collaborative orientations have been shown to increase performance where task conflict has disrupted the equilibrium of the organisational team and/or dyad (Behafar et al., 2008). Other authors have recommended that where the conflict is predominantly relationship focussed, avoidance strategies should be used (De Dreu & Van Vianen, 2001).

Ultimately, to ensure constructive conflict outcomes, many elements within the situation and the individual need to be considered. Conflict management is a necessary step in ensuring that some regulation does occur and the outcomes of unplanned (yet inevitable) conflict does not cause preventable costs.

## 2.9 CONFLICT MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

Conflict management interventions can be effective ways to address the lack of conflict management skills found in many modern organisations. There are, however, effective and ineffective conflict management systems. Effective systems take the nature of conflict into account:

Conflict is a social event that progresses through a series of escalating phases; progression to each sequential phase makes conflict more difficult to resolve (Monash University, 2012). The potential to elicit constructive conflict outcomes becomes slender with each consecutive unsuccessful resolution attempt. The process becomes more and more disruptive to the extent that “fire fighting” interventions like grievances and CCMA cases fail to resolve intense negative emotions even though a decision might have been taken. The inevitable result of unresolved conflict is reoccurring conflict episodes that eventually make a working relationship intolerable.

The vast spectrum of potentially devastating disruptive outcomes of unmanaged conflict should motivate organisations to pay more attention to cultivating conflict management skills amongst employees and providing paths for conflict resolution. The management of conflict is in most cases restricted to an overburdened grievance procedure that is more often than not perceived as punitive rather than curative. The development of an integrative conflict management system that can be freely used to solve major as well as minor conflicts between colleagues, superiors and subordinates and/or between unions and management cannot be stressed enough.

Pro-active conflict management interventions have been regarded as an effective strategy in restoring a functional relationship before it degenerates due to destructive conflict:

Conflict management is an umbrella term that refers to active attempts at integrating perceived incompatibilities in order to encourage a functional relationship. There are many

factors that need to be taken into consideration when attempting to manage conflict: the environment, the history with regards to previous conflict situations, the personalities and independent conflict handling styles of the individuals involved and the possible need for a mediator.

Rowe (1997) urges organisations to implement an integrative conflict management system that supplements systems that are generally reactive in nature (grievance procedures). Reactive systems are not nearly enough where lateral conflicts are concerned. Typically when lateral conflict reaches a stage where third party assistance is required to solve the problem, escalating conflict (due to widening of the perceptual field and negative feedback loops) has corroded the relationship to such an extent that future collaboration is impossible. Indeed:

*“The key to controlling the cost associated with workplace conflict is to address disputes early in their life cycle before they escalate beyond an organisations ability to effectively intervene”*

(Thomas, 2002, p. 2)

In an article (Monash University, 2012) a very useful diagram demonstrates how conflict can escalate if early interventions are not used to defuse the situation:

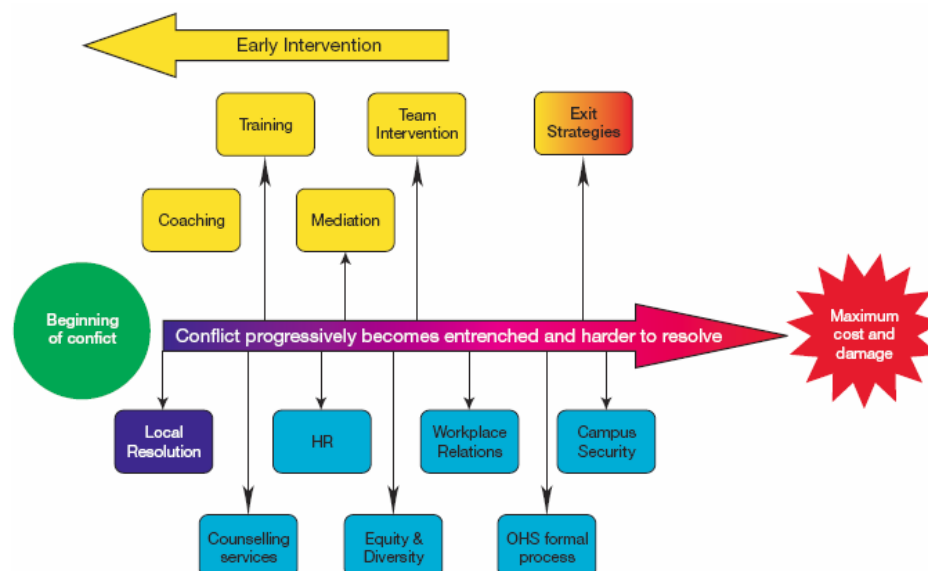


Figure 2.8. The importance of early intervention (Monash University, 2012)

In the model it is demonstrated that once conflict has become begun, early interventions such as local resolution and counselling should be efficient to remove negative emotions and productivity problems. Where a comprehensive conflict management system is not in place, conflicts often become too entrenched to resolve and often escalate to costly manifestations.

The ideal conflict management system has procedures and policies in place to assist individuals at all levels of the organisation to solve conflict at an early stage. This model demonstrates not only the ideal system but also alerts the reader to the fact that certain basic competencies are needed for individuals to manage conflict effectively; skills such as coaching and counselling can be essential in organisations that wish to solve conflict at the lowest level.

In South Africa where so many organisations lack an effective and efficient formal grievance procedure asking a company to implement OD (Organisational Development) interventions aimed at establishing an integrative conflict management system might be too much of a financial leap. Additionally, in companies that have a formal procedure in place, the system is severely backlogged (Rowe, 1997). The cost of settlements and litigation alone should be enough to scare top structures into investing in preventative measures. This is a distressing state of affairs especially because the need for cross cultural and cross racial teamwork is ever increasing and no one is waiting for South Africa to sort out the historic tensions between opposing groups. It is time that organisations acknowledged that conflict is not going away and start taking the management of conflict seriously.

## 2.10 SUMMARY

This chapter highlighted the complexities of conflict. In particular the chapter began by defining conflict and establishing a framework by which conflict can be conceptualised. The Bargaining model, Systems model and the Bureaucratic model was described in detail.

To summarise the discussion on the outcomes of conflict the three conflict models can be visually depicted:

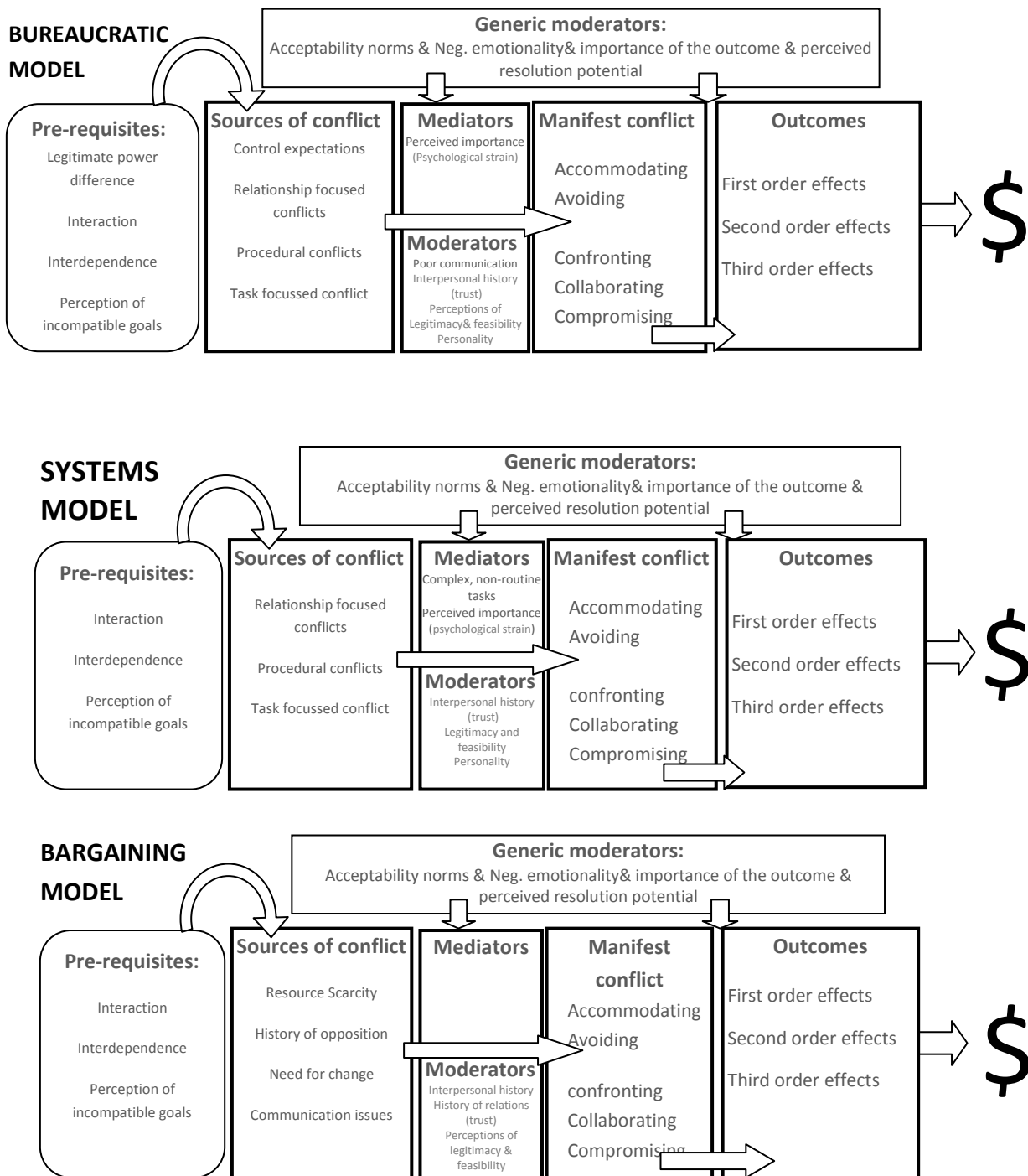


Figure 2.9. The conflict process for the bargaining, systems and bureaucratic models respectively

In summary, conflict is a chain of events linked by cause and effect relationships and moderated by several malleable skills and traits (e.g. conflict management skills and perceptions). Conflict is a social phenomenon that is inevitable and most likely disruptive.

Fortunately conflict is manageable. Organisations need to invest in skills training to deal with conflict related scenarios and not fool themselves into thinking that they have a grip on the conflict in their organisations. The majority of research in the field of conflict agrees that this is a necessary expense (Rowe, 1997; Thomas, 2002). To make the necessity clear to management is not easy. The need should be made tangible; the costs associated with conflict might help in this regard.

The complexities of conflict can be overpowering if not structured. The next Chapter (Chapter 3) outlines the methods with which conflict can be measured. It introduces measurement matrices and details the possible use of matrices to calculate the cost of conflict in organisations.

## CHAPTER 3: THE MEASUREMENT OF CONFLICT

### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous Chapter, Chapter 2, relevant literature was summarised to give the reader an overview of the nature of conflict and the possible effects that conflict might have on an organisation.

This chapter sets out the theoretical framework for measuring conflict in organisations. The chapter discusses HR matrices with particular focus on the potential for measuring the outcomes of conflict. The formulas underpinning the different matrices systematically accumulate to form a global formula for the calculation of costs relating to conflict.

As with many measuring tools, the measurement of conflict is not without its limits; the possible limitations to measuring conflict are examined before concluding the chapter.

### 3.2 USING HR METRICS

Qualitative and quantitative data that reports on the cost of conflict, builds understanding and credibility as opposed to merely providing anecdotes (Ford & Barnes-Slater, 2012). In an effort to prove that HR is a value adding function, increasing emphasis is being placed on measuring the effectiveness of interventions; HR metrics take various forms and, depending on the metric being used, can contribute to gaining a better understanding of the financial impact of interventions.

It has become a standard practice in large firms to calculate the cost of separations (turnover), the cost of acquisitions and the several types of training costs. Gaining a financial grip on the expenditure a company faces when talent is not properly sourced, is a factor used in many budget meetings.

A numbers based approach is not the only shape an HR metric can take: balanced scorecards are 360 degree assessments that take the evaluations of all stakeholders into account when assessing the impact of an intervention. Balanced scorecards are variable in the sense that the concept can be adjusted to suit the needs of the evaluation but generic because it always requires the views of more than one stakeholder. Unfortunately it is very difficult to translate the findings of the scorecard into “one currency”. Attitudes and morale



are as important as financial expenditure and might even affect performance to a greater extent but a dollar sign next to an outcome still speaks louder than an expert opinion making financial expenditure a more “important” outcome.

In an effort to analyse value based outcomes in terms of expenditure the process of utility analysis is used. Utility analysis is the process by which decisions are made using norming to make incomparable units comparable. A decision maker is asked to rate the importance of various outcomes on a scale of (for instance) 1 to 10 based on the decision maker’s assessment of the importance of the factor in contributing to success. The outcomes can involve financial costs as well as value based outcomes. In this way elements such as attitudes and morale are not left out of the equation just because they are difficult to quantify. These weights are then used to calculate which decision will yield the best Return on investment (ROI).

Utility analysis is therefore a process whereby multiple decisions are compared based on various factors. It does not provide the decision maker with a value that can be interpreted outside of a set of parameters and therefore is not a science that is easily generalised but the step by step nature of utility analysis makes it a tool that any business leader outside of HR can use to make decisions that involve multiple considerations. As Cascio and Boudreau (2011) point out; this method “elegantly combines both numbers and logic and helps business leaders make decisions about financial resources” (p. 5).

HR matrices essentially break down complex soft issues into tangible factors. In this way business leaders can target interventions to change situations based on hard data rather than relying on fraternity specific knowledge that does not necessarily translate across functions.

The benefits of tracking the effectiveness of HR functions contribute to understanding and monitoring but the difficulties in measuring attitude related outcomes deter most practitioners from tracking ROI initiatives. Attitude related outcomes are highly influenced by personality and individual circumstance; additionally the influence of attitudes on performance shows a time lag (Cascio & Boudreau, 2011). These elements make it difficult to estimate the effects of attitudes and emotional related cognitive states on the performance of the individual, the unit and ultimately the business.

These difficulties have deterred many researchers from investigating the impact and the effectiveness of HR interventions. Cascio and Boudreau (2011, p. 11) state that “even imperfect measures aimed at the right areas may be more illuminating than very elegant measures aimed at the wrong places” and it is hard to disagree.

Calculating the cost of conflict poses the same difficulties and therefore no theorists up to date have tried to estimate the financial impact of conflict within a business unit. Estimates have been made on the cost of separations and legal action but the organisation incurs conflict associated costs long before formal action is taken (Ford & Barnes-Slater, 2012). Even though some of the more emotional issues are beyond the scope of this study to estimate, a basic understanding of some of the financial impacts of conflict will illuminate an area undiscovered but highly relevant.

### 3.3 MEASURING CONFLICT OUTCOMES

There are many HR metrics aimed at investigating the efficiency with which HR delivers services to an organisation. Some of these metrics include turnover costs, absenteeism costs, costs of acquisitions and more of the like. At the time when this research was conducted the researcher was not aware of any attempts at developing a formula for the calculation of the cost of conflict in organisations.

The cost associated with conflict within a unit has infinitely more dimensions than simply “turnover due to conflict stress” or “absenteeism due to conflict related strain”. Conflict affects many dimensions of an employee’s effective functioning and should therefore include elements of multiple efficiency measures as well as aspects such as attitudes and morale that are yet to be made more easily quantifiable. It is beyond the scope of this article to design a measure that can quantify emotional reactions but a first step can be made in assessing the impact of conflict within a unit based on the current availability of HR metrics.

In the section on conflict outcomes (see Figure 2.7, p. 61) it was stated that outcomes can be grouped related to the ease with which it can be measured. The outcomes that this study will attempt to measure include:

- **replacement costs** (termination costs, recruitment costs, training and orientation costs),
- **conflict costs relating to time** (overtime, miscommunication, time loss, absenteeism, withdrawal due to emotional strain and productivity loss), and
- costs relating to **formal conflict resolution mechanisms**

Many efficiency measures are available to measure costs relating to working time and replacement costs and these metrics have been made easily accessible to practitioners by the Human Resource Management Society (SHRM) in conjunction with Wayne Cascio and John Boudreau. They have developed software that use raw company statistics to make calculations. The software is accessible to the public and can be accessed from the SHRM website (<http://hrcosting.com/hr/>). In this study it is deemed more fitting to calculate the estimations by hand. In this study the cost calculations are done manually due to the observed need to customise the input data to accommodate organisation specific benefit structures. At present the costing software is focussed on an American and European sample population but the software can be, and are used in order to contribute to the development of practical South African formulas.

The following basic computations are necessary to ensure that calculations specific to conflict can be made:

Table 3.1. Basic calculations for estimating the cost of conflict

<b>Cost element</b>	<b>Breakdown</b>
Benefits per hour	(Accommodation, water and lights + Travelling allowance + shares + Medical aid contribution + Pension and provident + Housing/living out allowance) / Hours worked
Wage per hour	Average salary per level / Hours worked
<b>Total compensation per hour per employee</b>	<b>Wage per hour + Benefits per hour</b>

The selected outcomes associated with conflict (outcomes related to working time, anticipated replacement costs and formal conflict resolution costs) are calculated and discussed in the following sections. The SHRM HR costing software is used as a guideline to incorporate necessary cost elements.

### 3.3.1 COSTS RELATING TO WORKING TIME

In organisations where employees receive a salary instead of being paid by “piece work” (per completed section of the task) it is expected that the employee will be actively participating in work related activities for the duration of the “normal” working shift.

Conflict has the potential to decrease the employee’s willingness to engage in work related activities. Additionally the effects of long terms stress and strain on the employee will decrease his/her wellbeing and affect his/her ability to perform to satisfactory standards or participate in normal work.

Systematically through displays of presenteeism and absenteeism, conflict erodes the ROI the company should receive from remunerating an employee. This section will further elaborate on the effects of absenteeism and presenteeism due to conflict.

#### 3.3.1.1 ABSENTEEISM

When attempting to attribute a monetary cost to employee absenteeism, several considerations should be taken into account. The most important is the distinction between scheduled and unscheduled absenteeism. Scheduled absenteeism includes any period for which the worker is not participating in scheduled working hours but has made the absence clear to management. These absences would include instances of approved leave. Unscheduled absenteeism includes sick leave and unauthorised absences. Due to the disruptive nature of unscheduled absenteeism it is focussed on when calculating the costs associated with absenteeism.

Another consideration to take into account is whether absent workers are paid. If not, the cost to company will be significantly less but not zero: unauthorised absences, even if unpaid, can disrupt the work of employees who needs to take on additional responsibilities in turn affecting the quantity and quality of work.

Hidden costs such as benefits paid on days even when the employee is absent, the time of supervisors spent on absenteeism problems and the possibility of contracting substitute employees to get the work done should also be taken into consideration.

Whether absenteeism is due to conflict will need to be investigated in terms of two likely motivators: being absent in an attempt to get back at the perceived aggressor (a refusal to collaborate) or being absent due to stress and strain associated with conflict in the employee's environment (hostile environment).

A 2007 CCH Unscheduled Absence Survey attempted to solicit the reasons for employee absences. The data indicated that 13% of unscheduled absenteeism can be attributed to "stress" and another 13% is due to an "entitlement mentality" (Cascio & Boudreau, 2011, p. 55). Even though these statistics do not perfectly reflect the two above mentioned motivators associated with conflict namely "refusal to collaborate" and "hostile environment" it does give a possible indication of what further investigation might yield. Once the percentage of absenteeism caused by conflict is estimated an estimate of the associated costs can be made.

To ensure that the reported absenteeism reflects absenteeism due to conflict the survey will make specific reference to the employee's reasons for being absent. In this way the study will attempt to measure only the portion of absenteeism related to conflict.

The following computations are necessary to calculate the monetary effects of conflict related absenteeism:

Table 3.2. Computations for estimating the cost of absenteeism

Absenteeism	
Cost element	Breakdown
Total employee hours lost	Lost due to administration + Lost due to compensating for absent employees work + (days lost to conflict x average working hours per day)
<b>Absenteeism cost per employee</b>	<b>(Total employee hours lost x Total compensation per hour)</b>

### 3.3.1.2 PRESENTEEISM

Presenteeism is a form of withdrawal behaviour sometimes called "slack productivity". Cascio and Boudreau (2011) warn that presenteeism might be a more costly occurrence than its more famous counterpart, absenteeism. Unlike absenteeism, presenteeism is a hidden occurrence affecting the quality and the quantity of work by affecting the motivation

and morale of workers. In companies where presenteeism is witnessed by fellow employees the tendency to withdraw can spread and presenteeism can significantly frustrate the attainment of important company goals.

Presenteeism therefore encompasses several conflict outcomes including low morale, withdrawal, “foot dragging”, toxic culture and overtime. The conflict outcomes that effectively form part of presenteeism are part of First Order (through quality problems leading to increased overtime), Second Order (through “foot dragging”) and Third Order effects of conflict (creating a hostile working environment).

Because conflict-induced presenteeism is most probably due to ruminating on the conflict situation or intentionally “going slow” a survey will be helpful to gain an understanding of the amount of employee time spent on unproductive withdrawal behaviour. Lowered quality of work can be linked to avoiding behaviour, withdrawal and low commitment that can in turn lead to missed deadlines and wasted time. The inability to meet deadlines and reach production targets will lead to increased overtime. Overtime can therefore be measured as an effect of presenteeism behaviour.

Once an estimate can be made on hours lost per employee group the following cost estimate can be made for presenteeism:

Table 3.3. Computations for estimating the cost of presenteeism

Presenteeism	
Cost element	Breakdown
Lowered quantity of output	Overtime worked + (Overtime rate x total compensation per hour)
<b>Presenteeism cost per employee</b>	<b>[(Hours lost while “foot dragging” + Hours lost due to ruminating on conflict + hours lost due to “cooling down”) x total compensation per hour] + lowered quality of output</b>

### 3.3.1.3 SABOTAGE

Employee sabotage occurs when employees engage in intentionally disruptive behaviour to damage the organisation’s property, product or service. Sabotage can range from violence to less expressive, overt forms like intentional miscommunication (Giacalone & Greenberg, 1996). Wang, Liao, Zhan and Shi (2011) investigated employee sabotage as an emotional

response to correct a “perceived injustice” effectively linking employee sabotage to conflict in the environment.

A severely disruptive First order effect of conflict is “getting back” at the object of frustration through sabotage. Even though managers might be aware of employee sabotage, or even be able to pinpoint a suspect, finding proof of the “intentional misbehaviour” is often an impossible task. For the purpose of this study only one form of employee sabotage are investigated namely intentional miscommunication.

Intentional miscommunication can be very costly to an organisation due to the effects that decreased communication can have on collaboration and cooperative attempts. In organisations where employees can function independently and few tasks depend on teamwork the effects of intentional miscommunication is likely to be minimal. In most organisations however, there is a dependency on teamwork, inter- and intra departmental information sharing as well as collaboration attempts to achieve mutual goals. In these organisations sabotage attempts like intentional miscommunication can severely decrease the individual goal achievement as well as the goal achievement of the entire organisation.

This study will only measure “intentional” miscommunication as a form of conflict behaviour through the survey questionnaire. The following calculation can be made to estimate the total employee hours lost due to a breakdown of communication lines:

Table 3.4. Computations for estimating the cost of sabotage

Sabotage	
Cost element	Breakdown
Intentional miscommunication	Hours lost due to intentional miscommunication + lost meeting time
<b>Intentional miscommunication cost experienced per employee</b>	<b>[hours lost due to intentional miscommunication x total compensation per hour]</b>

### 3.3.2 ANTICIPATED SEPARATION COSTS

Employee separations include all alternative employment options like terminations and transfers. Conflict influences an employee’s intention to leave: A survey on leading fortune

500 companies showed that 12% of employees changed jobs due to conflict in organisations (Jordaan, 2011).

Separations are costly to organisations because administrative tasks can be substantial and the company might lose high performing employees. These employees might be replaced with less competent employees or at the very least newly appointed employees still need to be trained and go through orientation. Figures vary but studies suggest that the turnover cost of an employee can vary anywhere between 30% to 50% of that employee's annual salary (Ford & Barnes-Slater, 2002).

Costs associated with replacing an employee can fall in the following categories ([www.costinghr.com](http://www.costinghr.com) referenced in Cascio & Boudreau, 2011):

- separation costs: that include exit interview costs, separation pay, administrative functions and unemployment tax
- replacement costs: communicating employment opportunity, pre-employment administration, entrance interviews, testing, staffing meetings, post-employment orientation time and medical examinations.
- Training costs: formal training programme time and resources, training literature and on the job training time
- Performance costs: difference in performance of previous employee and current employee.

### 3.3.2.1 VOLUNTARY SEPARATION OF A-PLAYERS

Turnover is usually measured by taking stock of how many employees leave the company but a more accurate estimation would be to include the costs of replacing that employee with an employee that can reasonably be expected to perform on the same level of the departed employee.

Employee separations are not inherently threatening: reducing the number of employees might be cost effective in the sense that the organisation might become more slim-lined or that "dead weight" is trimmed down and replaced with more efficient employees. Separations that improve the efficiency of the system are usually "involuntary" in the sense that the employee has no say in the process. "Voluntary" separations include movements



across the boundaries of the organisation at the employee's own free will (e.g. another job that offers more responsibly, improved benefits, or a better culture fit).

Companies tend to focus more on voluntary separations because it is an indication of the health of the system. When voluntary separations are high it is an indication that the system is having problems with retaining talent: this can be an indication of a toxic culture, non-competitive remuneration or any one of many other reasons. One reason in particular is relevant to this study: conflict. When conflict levels rise employees can decide to withdraw from the system in order to limit the negative effects that conflict might have on their emotional wellbeing and future opportunities in the organisation. Additionally they might leave with negative attitudes towards the organisation and company image might suffer as a result.

Separations can have a more detrimental effect on the effectiveness of the organisation if high levels of turnover are prevalent in talent pools consisting mostly of A-players (high performing employees that are difficult to replace). Turnover should therefore be more costly in the managerial/professional services.

When investigating the costs of conflict it is necessary to make a distinction between the employment levels within which turnover is occurring (blue collar, managerial/professional, white collar workers) and whether or not the departed employee left the company due to conflict within the system.

### 3.3.2.2 CALCULATING PERFORMANCE DIFFERENCES

Performance differences should be included in determining the net cost of turnover because if departing employees are replaced with less competent employees the cost of turnover will increase; comparatively the cost of turnover will decrease if a more competent employee is employed in the place of a less competent departing employee.

In a perfectly competitive labour market, employees receive pay equal to their labour but above entry level employees accumulate what is referred to as "firm specific human capital" (Cascio & Boudreau, 2011). "Firm specific human capital" is job related knowledge that the employee accumulates over time and that the organisation values and compensates the employee for having. The compensation an employee receives will start to reflect the competence an employee has and not the direct results of their labour. It is then reasonable

to assume that an employee's salary will reflect their competence, albeit an imperfect measure.

An employee's position in a salary range is expressed in terms of a "compa-ratio" (Cascio & Boudreau, 2011). The "compa-ratio" is used to express an employee's salary as compared to the mid-point in the pay-grade range. If an employee falls in a salary pay-grade that varies between R50 000 and R100 000 per annum and receives R80 000 per annum that employee will have a compa-ratio of 0.94. The mid-point of the pay-grade in this case is R75 000.

$$CR = \frac{MP}{\text{annual pay}}$$

$$\frac{75\,000}{80\,000}$$

$$0.94$$

The performance difference between a departing employee and the replacement employee will then in part be reflected in the difference between their compa-ratios. Cascio and Boudreau (2011) recommend the following calculation:

$$DP = \sum_{i=1}^n (CRa - CRb)MP_i$$

Here  $DP$  refers to the difference in performance,  $\sum_{i=1}^n$  to the summation over all departing employees and their replacements,  $MP$  the mid-point of the pay-grade and  $CR$  the compa-ratios ( $CR$ ) of the employees in question.

### 3.3.2.3 TOTAL ESTIMATED COST OF FUTURE EMPLOYEE SEPARATIONS

Employee separations are part of any organisations talent flow but environment specific effects that negatively impact employee morale can boost turnover to alarming levels. Increased levels of destructive conflict motivate employees to find alternative employment with less harmful impacts on their emotional wellbeing.

However, all employee separations do not necessarily result from destructive conflict. The study will have to establish the turnover intention of current employees in order to estimate the possible future cost of employee separations due to destructive conflict in the working environment.

Taking the  $CR$  into account, the following calculations are relevant for calculating the cost associated with anticipated employee turnover:

Table 3.5. Computations for estimating the cost of possible future separations

Future separation estimate	
Cost element	Breakdown
Interview costs	$[(\text{HR average total compensation per hour} \times 0.45\text{hours}) \times \text{average shortlisted candidates}]$
Industrial Psychological Services cost	Test cost + (HR average total compensation per hour x testing hours) + travelling costs
pre-employment administration costs	HR average total compensation per hour x average hours spent
Advertising new jobs	Average time for a vacancy to be filled + advertisement fees
<b>Replacement costs</b>	<b><math>2(\text{Moving allowance}) + (\text{entrance medical} + \text{exit medical}) + (\text{time for medical exam} \times \text{total hourly compensation}) + 2(\text{hand over time} \times \text{total hourly compensation}) + \text{interview costs} + (\text{Industrial Psychological Services cost}) + \text{pre-employment administration costs} + \text{advertising new jobs}</math></b>
separation interview	$(\text{Time required for the interview} + \text{preparation time}) \times (\text{HR average total compensation})$
Separation pay	In terms of the Basic Conditions of Employment act a voluntary separation (not subject to the operational requirements of the organisation) is not entitled to a separation package. The only possible payment would be outstanding leave based on section 20 of the Basic Conditions of Employment Act 75 of 1997.
post-employment administration costs	HR average total compensation x average hours spent
<b>Separation costs</b>	<b>Separation interview + Separation pay</b>
Paid learning time	Formal training time + Time spent on electronic-learning + time spent on orientation
Induction administrative time per induction	HR average total compensation x average hours spent
<b>Induction costs</b>	<b><math>(\text{Total pages in the manual} \times \text{cost per colour copy}) + \text{Total number of trainers}(\text{Trainer average total compensation per hour} \times \text{average hours spent}) + \text{induction administrative time}</math></b>
<b>Training costs</b>	<b>Formal study assistance cost + (paid learning time x total compensation per hour) + Induction costs</b>
Mid-point of the pay grade	Median (max job level pay, entrance job level pay)
Compa-ratio leaver	Mid-point/salary level

Compa-ratio replacement	Mid-point /entrance job level pay
<b>Performance difference</b>	<b><math>DP = (CR_{leaver} - CR_{replacement})Mid\text{-}point</math></b>
<b>Future separation estimate per employee</b>	<b>Performance difference of employee wishing to terminate employment due to conflict + Training costs + separation costs + replacement costs</b>

### 3.3.3 FORMAL CONFLICT RESOLUTION COSTS

A very direct result of conflict in organisations is the use of formal procedures to resolve disputes. Uncontested disputes that have multiple sources of supporting evidence are often managed and resolved by managers; disputes that are difficult for a manager to solve are often directed to the formal company grievance procedure; if the dispute remains unresolved the issue is taken to the CCMA. If one of the parties still remain dissatisfied with the outcome, the case can be referred to the labour court.

According to a survey done by Kwakwala (2010) 82% of CCMA cases are referrals based on unfair dismissals followed by 7% of cases relating to unfair labour practice. In rare cases of severe employee misconduct legal action can be taken by the company against the employee (examples include theft and vandalism); similarly entrenchments on the rights of employees can also lead to legal action against the company.

Ford and Barnes-Slater (2002) report that in 1986 (26 years ago) defending an accused's 'wrongful termination' cost a company an estimated R 850 000. Some wrongful terminations may be due to a lack of knowledge around governing legislation on procedural and substantive fairness but other claims are due to the "way workers felt they had been treated" (Lind, Greenberg, Scott, & Welchans, 2000, p. 557). The correlations found in the Lind, et al. (2000) study points to the fact that experiencing negative conflict interactions can encourage employees to refer their cases to the CCMA. It also implies that the effective conflict management of negative emotions in the course of disciplinarians and grievances can limit the amount of cases that are referred for re-investigation.

Events, such as grievances and formal CCMA cases, affect the company through lost time and settlement costs but also through losses in productivity as the moral of the workers (aware of the conflict) are affected. These effects can cause increased absenteeism rates as

employees attempt to avoid discipline or manage increased stress levels as well as presenteeism costs by negatively affecting employee morale and contributing to disengagement.

Costs associated with the use of formal procedures include settlement costs as well as “time spent” on resolving the conflict.

**Cost per manager/employee participating in the resolution process:**

Average annual salary per employee group / hours worked per year = **hourly wage**

Average annual cost for benefits per employee per year/ hours worked per year = **hourly benefits cost**

**(Hourly wage + hourly benefits cost) x hours spent on conflict resolution = total compensation lost to employees participating in conflict resolution**

Thus the cost of formal conflict resolution is summarised in Table 3.6.

Table 3.6. Computations for estimating the cost of formal conflict procedures

Formal conflict procedures	
Cost element	Breakdown
Formal conflict procedure costs per employee	total compensation per hour (Preparation time + procedure time) + settlement costs

### 3.3.4 THE ESTIMATED TOTAL COST OF CONFLICT

It can be postulated that absenteeism, sabotage, estimated separation costs and presenteeism account for many of the effects of conflict: employees who are disengaged with the organisation due to conflict will likely display an abuse of leave or alternatively “go slow” to compensate for perceived unfairness. Confusion and mistrust as well as a perceived poor company image will lead to intention to quit. Similarly other emotive elements feed into these “relatively tangible and measurable” elements of conflict.

The cost of formal conflict will also be added to the calculation to form an estimate of the cost conflict within a particular environment. Table 3.7 sets out the computations for estimating the total cost of conflict used in this study.

Table 3.7. Computations for estimating the total cost of conflict

<b>Total estimated cost due to conflict in the organisation</b>	
<b>Cost element</b>	<b>Breakdown</b>
<b>Total costs due to conflict</b>	<b>(Formal conflict procedure costs per employee) + (Presenteeism cost per employee) + (Absenteeism cost per employee) + (Intentional miscommunication experienced per employee)</b>
<b>Estimated future costs due to turnover intention induced by conflict</b>	<b>(Total number of employees indicating an intention to terminate employment due to conflict) x (Future separation estimate per employee)</b>

### 3.4 LIMITATIONS TO MEASURING CONFLICT IN ORGANISATIONS

It can be argued that due to the nature of conflict, conflict is inevitable in any organisation. The inevitability of conflict makes the calculation of costs associated with conflict resolution a “fixed cost” and fixed costs can only be reduced by changing the initial input into the system e.g. reducing the number of people in the organisation. Calculating the cost of conflict would in this case contribute to a body of knowledge with limited practical value.

Conflict can however be more destructive than necessary. In cases where conflict has degenerated into destructive outcomes, absent constructive resolution, the costs associated with conflict can no longer be seen as “fixed”. These costs are “variable” depending on the conflict resolution mechanisms used and whether constructive outcomes can be achieved given the right interventions. Destructive conflict is therefore a preventable cost.

As previously mentioned conflict episodes build into negative spirals: Reoccurring conflict between unions and management that are unresolved or have involved unsavoury actions on one or both parties’ behalf can be associated with “refusal to collaborate” or a loss in “effectiveness of initiatives” long after a specific conflict episode. People remember being slighted and carry over negative associations to new generations causing cycles of mistrust and hostility that are very difficult to erase. The entrenched hostility between parties can be difficult to measure.

It is acknowledged that a flawless measure for conflict is an ideal that will not be reached in this study. Due to the sensitive nature of conflict it is not expected that participants are a hundred percent honest about their experiences. It is expected that a more favourable picture of the perceived conflict in the organisation have been portrayed, yet the goal of this study is not to measure the amount of conflict without error but to give the reader a tool with which to measure conflict in other organisational settings. Future research is tasked with enhancing the tool.

### 3.5 SUMMARY

This chapter provided an overview of the computations that can be used in the calculation of an approximate cost of conflict in organisations. The calculations do not form an exhaustive list as it is not within the scope of this study to formulate a perfect equation for the cost of organisational conflict. Many of the conflict outcomes listed in Chapter 2 have however been used in an attempt to quantify conflict in terms of its negative effects on an organisation.

The chapter also discussed some of the limitations surrounding the measurement of conflict in organisational systems.

In the next chapter (Chapter 4) the research methodology that has been employed in this study are discussed.

## CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, the set of computations involved in calculating the costs of organisational conflict was discussed as it relates to destructive conflict outcomes.

In this study the qualitative research paradigm is used in order to collect information from interviews as well as a survey.

The outline of this chapter is as follows: a discussion explaining the rationale for qualitative research is followed by the data collection method, mode of analysis and issues relating to the quality of the research methodology.

### 4.2 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Qualitative research uniquely contributes to knowledge by incorporating experiences that create distinct meaning to different individuals. Qualitative methods take into account the context within which the phenomenon takes place. As explained in Chapter 2, conflict is a social phenomenon that changes according to various complex interactions within the environment. By taking into consideration conflict intricacies, a rich and detailed understanding of the cost of conflict can be achieved.

The contribution of qualitative methods can be summarised as follows:

- Context is taken into consideration
- The perceptions of individuals are taken into consideration
- Problems are addressed that cannot be assessed with traditional quantitative methods

Two studies are reported on based on the conflict process elements discussed in Chapter 2, by using structured interviews conducted within the participants place of work.

After in depth interviews have been used to gain a detailed understanding of the conflict environment, this study will make use of a survey to collect the quantitative data for the computations. This unison of quantitative and qualitative approaches is necessary in order



to firstly understand the conflict environment and then collect the data necessary for computation.

By using two case studies the reader gains a more comprehensive view of the possible conflict repercussions in an organisational system. The case study is clearly linked to the underlying theory discussed in the literature overview.

#### 4.2.1 CRITICISMS AGAINST THE USE OF QUALITATIVE METHODS

Social research has battled against the natural sciences to be recognised as contributing equally valuable knowledge to development. Partially this is due to the fact that qualitative methods have been disregarded as lacking scientific rigor when compared against quantitative methods.

According to Mays and Pope (1995) the most common criticism against qualitative research is the assumption that qualitative research is simply a collection of anecdotes, subject to personal bias. Critics therefore believe that qualitative research only affords a single perspective filtered by the researcher's opinion.

A second argument mentioned by Mays and Pope (1995) is that qualitative research has no reliability. The style of research is so subjective that another researcher will not find the same results, causing the research to lack reproducibility. The research is therefore only valid for the time and place in which it was conducted.

The final criticism against qualitative methods is the lack of generalizability (Mays & Pope, 1995). Qualitative research generates detailed information but only for a small number of applicants.

#### 4.2.2 RESPONSE TO CRITICISMS

Research can be defined as a set of techniques aimed at uncovering an underlying truth. In essence research aims to direct the researcher towards the Epistemic Ideal: towards the "perfect truth" even though it is unattainable. Scientific research however does not imply that a particular set of techniques should be used. A more appropriate state of mind would be to ensure that the set of techniques used is appropriate to answer the question in the most effective manner. Scientific rigor and method effectiveness can be achieved in both

qualitative and quantitative methods. Similarly research can be poorly conducted in qualitative methods or quantitative methods.

In order to ensure that a valid contribution is made, qualitative research makes use of a systematic design that discloses any potential barriers to meaningful insights. Additionally research attempting to uncover the truths around organisational conflict will be hard pressed to do so without acknowledging that individual perception plays a vital role. The validity of using qualitative methods in this study is justified due to the nature of conflict (it is subject to individual interpretations and emotionality). The main attempt is therefore not to generalize but to give the practitioner a tool with which to investigate conflict within his/her own context and to make a first step in placing a monetary value next to destructive conflict in organisations.

The objectivity of qualitative methods is often debated: because the researcher is heavily involved in the process it is argued that researcher bias could influence the results. Even though this study makes use of a case study methodology to obtain a rich and detailed description of the conflict context, the focus of the study is on the reported feedback in an anonymous survey.

The attempt to effectively cost the effects of conflict will be less effective if approached from a purely qualitative perspective due to the nature of conflict to be subjective and emotive.

### 4.3 METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

Chouduri, Glauser and Peregoy (2004) recommend that in an effort to ensure validity in qualitative research it is necessary for the researcher to ensure that the data collection process is clearly articulated; in particular how the samples were selected, what questions were asked and how the data was captured.

This study utilises a qualitative method using multiple perspectives within an overarching case. Two case studies within a single mine are discussed. The case study design involves an “in depth data collection [philosophy using] multiple sources of information rich in context” (Creswell, 1998, p. 61). Several perspectives are used to gain insight into a central phenomenon that can more readily be generalized than using a single perspective within a

single case study. This ensures some form of reliability as per Snow and Thomas (1994) recommendation.

The rest of Chapter 4 is dedicated towards describing the research process in depth.

#### 4.3.1 THE SAMPLE POPULATION AND SELECTED SAMPLE

According to Kruger (1998), when researching a phenomenon using a qualitative approach it is important to ensure that the selected sample composes of individuals who are likely to have been exposed to the phenomenon, are fluent in the language spoken by the researcher (in order to be able to communicate their perceptions accurately) and are willing to participate.

To achieve the necessary scientific rigour, this study will use 2 sample groups from the mining industry. The samples are drawn from a single mine in the Mpumalanga region. The cases are specifically selected due to the likelihood that the participants are exposed to some form of conflict; therefore they are likely to be “exposed to the phenomenon”.

The sample groups will comprise of employees on remuneration levels high enough to presuppose fluency in English, therefore enabling the researcher to properly investigate the perceptions of the participants. Remunerations levels range from middle-management to top-management.

The sample groups will consist of the natural teams in the organisational structure. In this way the employee composition of the sample groups are similar and participants are exposed to similar tasks.

There are 2 prominent sample groups in the structure of the mine that consist of the same number of specialised job titles:

Table 4.1. Composition of sample group

Employee group	Employee categories	Employee levels	Total employees	Total interviewed	Total questionnaire distribution
Mine shaft 8	Management and Specialist as well as Bargaining unit employees ranging from remuneration level C3 to D4.	Foremen Section Head Shaft managers Production managers Mine overseer Shift boss Section engineers Master Artisan Coordinators HR	40	8	40
Mine shaft 10	Management and Specialist as well as Bargaining unit employees ranging from remuneration level C3 to D4.	Foremen Section Head Shaft managers Production managers Mine overseer Shift boss Section engineers Master Artisan Coordinators HR	40	8	40

After the organisation was approached and approval to conduct the study was granted the sample groups were duly informed: To inform the group of the pending study the group was addressed during their weekly safety meetings. The first meeting involved a general discussion on the benefits of the study. The *informed consent form* was explained after which employees had the opportunity to ask questions for clarity. It was made clear that participation in the study is voluntary and that refusing will in no way negatively impact the employee.

The data collection procedure was explained to the employees and an emphasis was placed on anonymity and confidentiality. In this manner the researcher hopes to gain an honest and realistic reflection of conflict:

Eight employees were selected from Shaft 8, and eight from Shaft 10 to attend an interview in order to gain an understanding of the working environment. The sample was based on computerised random selection. The employees were free to choose whether or not they wish to participate. When faced with a refusal another employee was selected using random selection.

Once selected for the interview, a time convenient to the participant was arranged. A meeting was conducted in their own working space. Here it was explained to the employee that the information shared was only to be used for academic purposes and in no way can the participant's individual contributions be linked to a name. In this way anonymity is ensured. By having this conversation the researcher attempted to build rapport with the participant. All but one participant was comfortable in participating in the study. The participant who refused was replaced using computerised random selection.

Before the interview could commence it was requested that the participant sign an *informed consent form* demonstrating that the employee understood the ethical issues involved (Appendix A). The form was thoroughly explained to the participant and the employee was supplied with a copy for his/her safekeeping.

The second data collection step involved the entire group and required them to complete the research survey (Appendix C). Due to the sensitive nature of conflict some form of attrition was experienced.

The group was approached in their weekly safety meeting where they were addressed as a collective to explain the survey questionnaire. They were asked to complete the survey manually and anonymously drop the completed form in a locked survey box. Again it was explained to the sample that participation is voluntary and that refusing will in no way negatively impact the employee.

If willing to participate, the employees were asked to complete the *informed consent form* upon receiving the survey questionnaire. The *informed consent form* was explained to each employee. Each employee received a copy for their own reference.

Only one employee preferred to have the survey sent to their email. The employee preferred to manually submit the *informed consent form* and the completed survey by dropping the completed forms into the submission box. It was also an option to have the survey scanned and sent to the researcher via anonymous document scan.

By involving the entire sample and ensuring confidentiality and anonymity the case study will have multiple perspectives for estimating the cost of conflict in this particular mine; by focussing on Shaft 8 and Shaft 10 some culture differences are expected and therefore some differences in the forms and intensity of conflict.

#### 4.3.2 PILOT STUDY

A pilot study is a small experiment designed to test logistics and gather information prior to a larger study, in order to improve the quality and the efficiency of the main study (Van Teijlingen, 2012). To address possible issues with objectivity and internal validity this study utilised a pilot study to test the interview questions and the survey questions.

A pilot study can reveal deficiencies in the design of a proposed experiment or procedure and these can then be addressed before time and resources are pointlessly spent (Van Teijlingen, 2012). Issues that are sometimes reported on include:

- Uses with the wording and the order of the questions,
- difficulties with practicalities like the distribution of questionnaires and inefficient response rates,
- local politics that can affect honest and timely response rates,
- issues with culture

The pilot study used a small group of volunteers, who are as similar as possible to the target population. The interview and the survey were administered to the volunteers in exactly the same way as with the main study. These volunteers were asked for feedback regarding possible ambiguities and difficult questions.

A concern with the use of a pilot study is *data contamination* due to the likelihood of the pilot study participants to be included in the main study population (Van Teijlingen, 2012). Here the concern is that such participants have already been exposed to the intervention and, therefore, may respond differently from those who have no previous knowledge of the

topic. This study therefore excluded the pilot study participants from the target population to avoid data contamination. The results of the pilot study will therefore not be included in the data analysis of the main study.

Once the results of the pilot study were integrated with the research design the following findings contributed to refining the study:

The outcome of the pilot study resulted in certain refinements being made: rephrasing unclear questions, correcting the logical order of questions and assisting in identifying practical concerns with the distribution of the questionnaire.

In terms of the interview questions difficulties were experienced in guiding the employees to understand the very broad topic of organisational conflict. Employees revert back to formal conflict and tend to forget about any other instances in which informal disagreements may have caused them discomfort. In order to address this issue some open ended questions have been included in the interview to start guiding the employee to a more comprehensive understanding of conflict.

The pilot participants answered the interview questions very generically – indicating instances of conflict that are industry wide or companywide. Several questions needed to be rephrased so that the employee could envision instances that are specific to this year and to his/her current working environment (shaft 8 or shaft 10).

Some culture specific metaphors needed to be re-worded in order to ease communication.

The survey questions were similarly re-worded and re-organised to ensure a logical sequence and limit generic answers to questions.

It was observed that even though employees were willing to participate they lost interest quickly and did not complete the full survey. It was decided to shorten the questionnaire and remove any unnecessary detail.

#### 4.3.3 STRUCTURED INTERVIEW

In order to gain an understanding of the unique emotional and circumstantial elements that contribute to the experience of conflict within the case study it is necessary to interview

some of the employees that are experiencing conflict. Their insights are essential in reporting a rich case study.

The interview guide was designed to elicit information enabling aimed at conceptualising the case study within the conflict framework identified in Chapter 2. The interview guide primarily makes use of open ended questions to draw out examples that might be indicative of elements in the conflict frameworks proposed in Chapter 2. The interview guide is attached as Appendix B.

The link between the different sections in the Interview Guide and the different elements in the conflict models is set out in Table 4.2 below.

Table 4.2. Link between Interview Guide questions and conflict elements

Question	Conflict element	Rationale
1	Pre-requisites and generic moderators	The question was included to get the employee to start thinking about his environment and the possible conflict he may experience even though it is not overt.
2	All elements	The question was included to help the employee to start thinking about situations in which he has experienced or witnessed conflict. It gives insight into the employee's perspective of what constitutes as conflict.
3	All elements specifically generic moderators	Whether he has a negative/positive or a neutral view of conflict will determine how he will approach many of the steps in a conflict situation.
4	Sources of Conflict	Common reasons for conflict could include relationship, procedural, task focussed reasons or differences in the control expectations.
5.1	All elements	The description of a conflict situation will give insights into all elements of the conflict process.



5.2	Prerequisites	Insight into whether or not the employee can identify incompatible goals or some form of interdependence as a element in the situation.
6.1	All elements	The description of a conflict situation will give insights into all elements of the conflict process.
6.2	Prerequisites	Insight into whether or not the employee can identify incompatible goals or some form of interdependence as a element in the situation.
7	Sources of Conflict, Mediators and Moderators	The importance of the conflicts is an important moderator in the conflict process but can also be a symptom of a generally conflict rich environment.
8 & 9	Mediators and Moderators	Prevalence of aggravating and suppressing actions observed in the workplace.
10 & 11	Mediator and Outcomes	Psychological strain as a mediator. Many short and long term outcomes relating to conflict could be identified.
10 & 12	Manifest conflict	Conflict management strategies as it relates to conflict in the three different models.
12 & 13	Outcomes	Perceptions around what conflict in the working environment causes for the three parties.
14.1	Manifest conflict & outcomes of conflict	Directly links behaviour to productivity. Conflict literature links latent conflict conditions and disruptive outcomes to a drop in productivity. Likely conflict elements would include latent conditions/conflict indicators (gossip, complaining and petty arguments) and conflict outcomes (stress, frustration, low levels of collaboration, avoidance, passive

		aggressive behaviour, abusive behaviour and distrust).
14.2	Moderators and Mediators	The frequency with which negative actions occur can aggravate the conflict situation by increasing psychological strain, fostering acceptability norms, reducing resolution potential, increasing negative emotionality and forming a distrusting environment where poor communication grows.
14.3	Manifest conflict and conflict outcomes	The manner in which employees respond to a conflict situation can either hinder or improve relations. Of particular importance is the manner in which leadership approaches conflict.
14.4	Generic moderators and outcomes of conflict	Perceptions around the success of the intervention will determine if confidence in the “resolution potential” of conflict grows.
15	All elements specifically mediators and moderators	Relates to the leadership and the positive elements in the environment that might sustain some form of positive employee relations.
16	Manifest conflict	Literature identifies conflict as an emotional occurrence that is often accompanied by frustration. Nurturing negative emotionality is highly relevant where conflict is destructive.
16 & 17	Mediators and Moderators	A toxic environment contributes to destructive conflict.

The interview guide was designed to limit bias by guiding the researcher to consistently ask the same questions in each interview. Also the guide was designed to ensure that all the themes covered by the literature overview were asked.

#### 4.3.4 SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

After the interviews, data was collected using a survey designed to gain information necessary for effective cost estimation. Information included in the survey focus on morale and personal circumstance. The questionnaire was distributed to the two sample groups on the mine.

Sample questions from the survey (Appendix C) include:

*“Estimate how many working hours have you lost due to experiencing intentional miscommunication/ refusals to collaborate in 2012?”*

*“During working time, how much time have you spent thinking about conflict situations in 2012?”*

The complete survey questionnaire has been listed in Appendix C.

Using the costing formulas the following conflict costs are estimated using the relevant questions in the questionnaire:

Table 4.3. Survey Questionnaire questions and costing conflict calculations

CALCULATIONS	QUESTIONS IN SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE
Basic calculations and case study relevance	1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9
Costs due to absenteeism	11,15,17,18,19
Costs due to presenteeism	12,13,15,10
Costs due to Sabotage	14,16
Estimated future turnover costs due to conflict	23,24,25,26,27,28,29,30
Formal conflict situations (grievances and CCMA cases)	20,21,22

The information collected from the survey questionnaire was used in the formulas for estimating the cost associated with conflict within the selected case studies. The researcher had control over the cost estimations at all times.

Some generic employment costs were collected via the organisation's administrative system (SAP) and were used to estimate the employment costs when calculating the cost of conflict. Table 4.4 sets out the different elements of employment costs.

Table 4.4. Employment costs

Maximum salary per level and overtime rate	D4	R	0
	D3	R	0
	D2	R	0
	D1	R	0
	C5	R	1.25
	C4	R	1.25
	C3	R	1.25
Average salary per level and overtime rate	D4	R	0
	D3	R	0
	D2	R	0
	D1	R	0
	C5	R	1.25
	C4	R	1.25
	C3	R	1.25
Starting/lowest/basic salary per level and overtime rate	D4	R	0
	D3	R	0
	D2	R	0
	D1	R	0
	C5	R	1.25
	C4	R	1.25
	C3	R	1.25
Average total compensation for HR officer per hour	R149.28		
Average interview duration	Hours: 0.45		
Average number of candidates shortlisted for a vacant position	Total: 5		
Average hours spent on pre-employment administration	Hours:1		
Average time for a vacancy to be filled	Hours: 389.7		
Advertisement fees	R 30 000		
Medical examination costs	R 526.32		
Average time for a medical examination	Hours: 8		
Average time for an exit interview	Hours: 0.30		
Average time to complete an employee separation/termination	Hours: 0.45		
Average time needed to process employee induction administration	Hours: 0.45		
Total pages in an induction training manual	Pages: 102		
Average compensation for a trainer per	R 122.34		

hour	
Total induction hours spent (basic fire fighting, first aid, induction to the mine, underground safety, Risk assessment training)	Hours: 40

#### 4.3.5 DATA ANALYSIS

The interview guide was completed in short hand by the researcher. Transparency was maintained as the participant was in full sight of the responses that the researcher wrote down. The transcribed responses are included as Appendix D (Shaft 10) and Appendix E (Shaft 8). These transcripts formed the basis with which the case study description was compiled.

A systematic approach was used to dissect the transcripts into the essential features of conflict. The content was analysed with the intent to find examples that will describe the frequency and types of conflict experienced by participants in their working environment. The sources of conflict, moderators and mediators of conflict, types of manifest conflict and conflict outcomes described in Chapter 2 of this study have been used to unpack the raw interview data and identify reoccurring themes.

The survey questionnaire data was used as input in the computations discussed in chapter 3 in order to calculate the costs associated with absenteeism, presenteeism, sabotage, formal conflict costs as well as future separation costs due to conflict in the environment. A clear link was made between the patterns identified in the interviews and the results from the computations.

#### 4.3.6 RELIABILITY

The reliability of research refers to the consistency of research findings and is a prerequisite to research validity (Holliday, 2002). Inconsistencies in the data gathering approach and ambiguity in the data collection tool threaten the reliability of qualitative research.

The noted concern with reliability was addressed by describing the research process in detail. Each step in the process necessitates an accurately completed former step. Furthermore the researcher made use of critical input from academics working in the field to test the rigour of the research method.

Multiple observer bias was avoided as the researcher alone was responsible for data gathering and analysis. The stability of using a single interpreter to analyse the data contributes to the reliability of the research study.

In the attempt to manage the concerns with reliability this study made use of multiple scenarios. Sample size has been increased in comparison to traditional qualitative methods in order to lend the study increased soundness.

#### 4.3.7 VALIDITY

The validity of qualitative research refers to the ability of the findings to contribute to a deeper understanding of the phenomenon under investigation (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2003). The ability of the methodology used in the current study to contribute to a meaningful understanding of the research question was improved by the use of a pilot study. The pilot study assisted in uncovering possible ambiguities and flaws in the research tools which contributed to the ability of the data to assist in answering the research question.

The validity of the study was further improved by ensuring transparency during the interviews; the participants had a clear view of the transcripts made. Participants were asked to indicate if they perceived the notes to be a truthful reflection of their answers before the interview was concluded.

The conflict profiles of the two sample groups were analysed using themes discussed in Chapter 2 namely: prerequisites to conflict, sources of conflict, mediators and moderators to conflict, manifest conflict and conflict outcomes. The experiences of the participants were presented in a coherent and logical structure in order to comprehensively describe the conflict profile of the two separate Shafts. In this manner validity was enhanced as the current study reflects the findings from past studies.

The validity of qualitative research is, according to Kvale (1996), a function of the potential of the findings to stimulate further research on the topic. This study is the first step in utilising established HR metrics in order to attribute a monetary value to conflict. Future research will be tasked to refine the measure but with the completion of this study a more substantive case can be made for companies to invest in comprehensive pro-active conflict management systems.

#### 4.3.8 INFORMED CONSENT

As mentioned in previous sections, the participants were informed of the steps taken to ensure anonymity. The participants were informed that all data shall be treated with confidentiality. Any issues of discomfort were addressed before the participant was asked to sign the informed consent form. The participants were informed of their rights to decline participation and it was insured that they suffer no penalties if wishing to do so. The participants were informed of the rationale for the study; if they wish to get further clarity they could contact the researcher or the study supervisor.

#### 4.4 SUMMARY

In this chapter, the research methodology for the study is explained. The rationale for the use of qualitative research is addressed followed by the methodological approach.

The parameters for the sample population and the used selection criteria are recorded as well as the means by which data collection took place.

A brief discussion of the quality of the research addressed the reliability and validity of the study.

In the following chapter (Chapter 5) the research results are presented.

## CHAPTER 5: PRESENTATION OF RESEARCH RESULTS

### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, the research methodology was discussed in detail.

In this chapter, the research results are discussed. The raw data is included in Appendix D and Appendix E if the reader wishes to gain additional insight into the conflict perceptions of participants.

Two cases within a single underground mine are deliberated on. The similarities in the structure of work and the division of labour are discussed as a generic element within the conflict profile of both cases whereafter the individual qualities of each case are elaborated on.

In the presentation of the results the participants are directly quoted (in italics) so that the study remains true to the lived experiences of the participants and enriches the understanding of the reader. By including the discussion extracts the reader has the opportunity to enrich the understanding of each conflict profile.

The discussion of emerging themes will enable reflection on the findings in chapter 6.

### 5.2 BACKGROUND TO CONFLICT PROFILES

As mentioned before the two case studies are analysed based on the bureaucratic model of conflict and the systems model of conflict. The presence of some, or all of the determined prerequisites for conflict, determine the relevance of the conflict profile for the study. Within the Bureaucratic model and the Systems model of conflict similar pre-requisites can be identified namely: interaction, interdependence and a perception of incompatible goals.

Within Shaft 8 and Shaft 10 the division of labour and the line of authority are structured in the same way. Elements pertaining to conflict prerequisites can therefore be generalized across both case studies:

Members of the shaft are highly dependent on each other. Tasks are separated into specific categories of work that are interconnected to form divisional teams. Multiple divisional teams with essentially the same job composition work in different sections, each responsible for adding to the total production of the shaft.



Most employees are multi-skilled and are able to assist with elements of work that are not specifically in their job description. This is a historical remnant of a time where the mine made use of multi-skilled task teams instead of the now hierarchal division of labour. The current division of labour assists in legal compliance and monitoring of performance but does away with the multi-skilling allowance that an employee received for being able to assist with multiple tasks. Employees are explicitly forbidden to assist with tasks that fall outside of their job descriptions because in case of an accident they will be held legally responsible and will not be covered by mine insurance.

The division of labour is of such a nature that the absence of one player or the breakdown of one machine causes a total standstill in production for the section. Unfortunately even if an employee has the experience to assist with the breakdown or take over the responsibilities of an absent colleague he cannot do so due to the technicalities in mine insurance.

The high levels of **interdependence** within sectional teams necessitates high levels of team unity in order to produce at optimum levels. Each employee has to be driven and results orientated for the other team members to be able to perform.

Section teams are managed by Foremen who do not formally form part of the underground production team but are equally responsible for ensuring their section's performance.

The foremen and two additional layers of management form part of the team responsible for the shaft's production. A mine manager oversees production for the entire shaft. There is a distinct **division of power** as different levels of management have authority to oversee and manage their immediate lower level of management.

The total management team can be divided into two generic career divisions: engineering and mining production. The two career ladders have their own branches of power and authority but are required to work hand-in-hand in order to ensure production (mining production) and reduced breakdowns (engineering production).

The total management team have weekly meetings, one of which is an all inclusive production planning meeting - the other a smaller divisional safety meeting. Separate engineering and mining production meetings are also held. Each foreman is responsible for

cascading information down to his sectional team as these teams do not form part of formal meetings.

There are high levels of **interaction** between management and there are high levels of interaction within the sectional teams but the only level of interaction between the management levels and the sectional teams are through middle management e.g. the foremen.

The two case studies have the same organisational structure and the above mentioned interaction patterns apply to both Shaft 8 and Shaft 10. The two shafts are however 12km apart and perceived by employees to be very different in terms of culture and specifically levels of conflict. For this reason it was decided to investigate conflict at each shaft separately.

### 5.2.1. BIOGRAPHICAL DATA

A total of 40 employees from Shaft 8 and Shaft 10 were approached to participate in the study. Each sample population therefore consisted of 40 employees.

A set of questions in the survey questionnaire (Appendix C) was aimed at collecting biographical data on the sample. From the 80 possible participants, 46 responded. According to Babbie and Mouton (2005) a “response rate of 50 per cent is adequate for analysis and reporting” in survey research (p. 261). Unfortunately, 5 completed questionnaires could not be used due to critical fields in the survey questionnaire being left unanswered. The usable responses were 41 in total; 19 responses for Shaft 8 and 22 responses for Shaft 10.

Biographical data for the two samples were collected based on the following categories: gender and ethnic origin. Table 5.1 sets out the biographical data of participants for the different shafts.

Table 5.1. Biographical data of participants per shaft

Shaft	Gender		Ethnic origin	
	Male	Female	White	Black
Shaft 8	16	3	13	5
Shaft 10	18	4	13	9

From the table it can be seen that there were significantly less female participants than males and less black participants than white participants. The reason for this discrepancy is that the sample population is currently populated with a majority of white males and this is reflected in the demographics of the participant group.

The two case studies focus on the management team (level D4 to C4) as well as the first level of contact within the sectional team (Master Artisans level C3). Due to the small participant group, the study will not report on the dispersion of participants with regards to pay level. The risk of possible identification in pay groups with only 1 or 2 candidates compromises the anonymity of participants. The data was necessary to collect in order to use in the conflict formulas.

### 5.3 CONFLICT PROFILE: SHAFT 10

The following case study is compiled using the information gathered in interviews with members of Shaft 10. The interview guide is attached in Appendix D.

The results of the interviews have been analysed and the responses of the members have been purposefully used in order to describe the case with reference to the Systems conflict model and the Bureaucratic conflict model.

#### 5.3.1 PRE-REQUISITES

As previously mentioned the division of power and line of authority in the shaft facilitates interaction, interdependence and a legitimate power difference. This is reiterated in the responses received from participants:

*“I respect my manager because I have to, he is the manager. Respect should come from both sides. I am not happy with how we are managed. There is a lot of favouritism. It makes me not want to do my job.”*

In the first sentence the participant refers to the fact that the **power difference** between himself and his manager is due to their difference in authority and that he has “no choice” but to respect the chain of command. Even though this is a clear example of how power differences are observed by the employees it also alerts the reader to clear feelings of resentment. The employee observes **goal incongruence** between what he perceives as fair treatment and what the manager is using to manage his subordinates.

*“We cannot produce if we do not work together”*

In a simple way the participant explains that the different roles need to co-operate in order to be successful. He is aware that the different jobs depend on each other and the end goal is not achievable if one of these jobs does not function properly.

*“Instructions are not taken. They do what they want to do, and then they deny that they ever got the instructions. It is an attitude problem. They act clever but they don’t know anything. It is a power struggle. I love my job but I just want to leave. I will die of a heart attack. All I attempt to do is being frustrated. I can achieve nothing. They interfere with everything. They micromanage me and then I retract from doing my job but I still have to carry the responsibility?!”*

Employees at the shaft experience **high levels of interaction**, to the extent that some of the employees describe interaction patterns as being “micromanaged”. Interactions seem to be focussed on giving unilateral instructions and following up on the instructions given. None of the participants described interactions other than strictly work related, pressurised and frustrated exchanges. Some employees utter desires for the interactions to be different:

*“Long ago the environment was friendly. We would mix, make jokes and work hard. Not anymore.”*

At the shaft there are **high levels of interdependence** in order to produce desired end-results. This pressure to perform is felt by the whole shaft and especially by the top management team. All the interviewed participants talked about the pressure; pressure to

produce was either felt by the employee directly or indirectly by means of “unreasonable” managerial instructions.

*“As an artisan it was bad. They did not treat me well. They send you around and around. It was not nice to be a fitter.”*

*“The environment is defensive in general. People tend to attack from the back. If production is up then people are more positive. Mood is linked to the tones that we take out.”*

The elevated levels of pressure cause employees to use formal authority to enforce compliance. They emphasise their “managerial right” and focus on small tasks lower down in the hierarchy. Their micromanaging behaviours are seen as highly obtrusive and instead of ensuring a result driven culture they re-enforce a defensive atmosphere because employees are being “checked-up” on.

The prerequisites for conflict are present in this conflict profile and additional components like historic breaches of trust and old rivalries hint towards significant potential for relationship driven conflict and not just conflict within the bureaucratic and systems model.

### 5.3.2 SOURCES OF CONFLICT

The interviewed employees made reference to multiple sources of conflict.

**Expectations of control** were explicitly challenged in some of the employee’s responses. Employees clearly expected their jobs not to be changed or differently managed to their established patterns and took offence to the manner in which authority positions disregarded their insight and expertise.

*“People jump over and fiddle with each other’s jobs. Even good friends fight with each other because everyone is up in each other’s business.”*

The conflict situations that the employees encounter at the shaft are catalysed by a frustrating occurrence: something that interrupts or limits performance to some extent and can therefore be seen as predominantly **task driven or procedural conflict**:

*“Differences in opinion regarding plans and solutions cause conflict and that gets worse with production stress.”*

When asked to describe common reasons for conflict, employees mainly focused on problems related to the manner in which the conflict is being approached.

*“There is no respect for one another. People speak their minds without taking the other person into account. They have a disregard for the other person’s feelings. They force their point of view on others and they don’t listen. There is no communication.”*

Interviewees named communication patters, interpersonal skills, negative emotions and a lack of respect as the main reasons for conflict. The conflict does not seem to remain procedurally focussed or task driven because the manner in which the conflict is addressed is perceived as a personal attack. The conflict turns into **relationship focussed conflict** that systematically erodes the trust and the respect that employees should have for each other in a healthy system.

*Conflict is... “Bad communication, high levels of autocratic decision making (a forceful top-down approach) and not enough experience with conflict (people make bad conflict management decisions). There might not be enough training given to provide the employees with tools to manage conflict. It just gets out of hand. People walk out of meetings. They talk disrespectfully and loudly to each other and the whole team gets negative.”*

*“People tend to be defensive. They don’t focus on the subject matter, they personalise things. They attack the person and then it shifts the mood.”*

Even though it is evident that the source of the conflict is often a procedural or a task related disagreement the conflict often turns into a battle of personalities. At this point the employees lose their thinly stretched patience and the conflict becomes personal and publically aggressive.

### 5.3.3 MEDIATORS AND MODERATORS

In this conflict profile **negative emotions** play a very big moderating role: relationships have been eroded to such an extent that the smallest offence causes an emotional eruption:

*“There is a culture of people not “giving a damn”. There is no pride, no ownership in the work that they do. There are too many chiefs and too little Indians. They just want a paycheck and they don’t care about the rest. If you don’t care about something and I take you on you will be defensive because you won’t have the best interest of the company to*

*think about. You will just think about yourself. People say that attack is the best defense. They don't want a solution; all that they see is someone attacking them personally."*

Employees perceive interactions to be tense and attacking. They have an expectation that if they do not ferociously defend themselves they will become the person who gets blamed for the inefficiency of the shaft. Finding a solution to the "problem" is not even on the agenda as they find it more important to **defend their personal worth**:

*"We are not producing and then people get frustrated. They blame each other for the problems but they never get to fix the problems."*

The severe negative emotions that can be observed at this shaft decrease the **perceived resolution potential** of possible conflicts:

*"Sometimes team members are fist and fingers in each other's face. Then you have to get them all in your office and have them sort it out in front of you. I will make them shake hands. They probably won't solve the conflict but at least they leave each other alone. They fight in very public ways. It is the same things with the supervisors."*

Most interviewed employees believe conflicts to be impossible to fully resolve. They see the apparent source of conflict pass but they notice that the damage done to the relationship gets worse with every conflict.

*"90% of the time people superficially get along with each other but the underlying conflict never gets resolved. It has been going on forever. Especially mining and engineering and that fight flares up when something goes wrong."*

The resolution potential of most conflicts at the shaft are perceived to be extremely low partially because the way in which employees express their frustration is **publically disrespectful** and damaging to healthy relationships.

*"When there is no openness in communication. One party giving unilateral instructions but people need to air their views. They are just cut down. It boils up in them and then they explode or they leave the company."*

*"People are shot down in public and then they just retract and don't produce. Others will moan but they will do the work if you publically criticise them. The teams do not want to*

*listen to their leaders; they think that the leaders are incompetent. In these situations we often have to move the team composition but the conflict is then never resolved."*

The statements express a shared apprehensiveness at the shaft; interaction is not communication and it is apparent that **communication skills** are in short supply. The norm at the shaft is to express your frustration with a situation as frustration with a person. Publically humiliating exchanges of harsh criticism occurs; this damages the respect that employees have for their leaders and creates the norm that it is acceptable to display aggressive and threatening behaviour towards your fellow employee. Employees are well aware of the negative impact that these interactions can have on fellow employees and on their **credibility as a leader**.

*"There is a lack of respect, a blame game and people not taking responsibility and accountability and people do not know how to communicate. Communication problems also relate to respect. You can say one thing in many different ways and give the same meaning but the emotional effect is different."*

Even though employees are aware that it is not acceptable to behave in a rude and disrespectful manner towards another employee, the set of interviews was ripe with bad conflict management examples. The **acceptability norms** at the shaft might not be to publically humiliate a fellow employee but these actions do occur regularly enough for multiple instances to be expressed.

The **perceived importance of the conflict outcome** contributes to the desire of the individual to engage in conflict to find a solution that will satisfy his/her goals. Theoretically, people would be more invested in finding an appropriate solution to the problem if the outcomes of the conflict situation are perceived to be critical to achieving personal goals. This can be seen as an adaptive response to conflict but maladaptive responses despite the perceived importance of the outcome are also possible. It can be argued that the more important the outcome, the more invested the parties and the more fiercely they will compete to achieve a personally beneficial outcome. Whether the approach will be adaptive or maladaptive depends on the negative emotionality in the conflict situation.



*“It depends; some of them can fight about useless things. They waste time. In their eyes it is important. One of them at least. On the other side people can also fight about important production related things.”*

The statement clearly indicates that the disagreement needs to be important for at least one of the parties for a solution to be perused. The manner in which the conflict is addressed is however not beneficial to solving the conflict:

*“Mostly we fight about important things but people do not listen to each other. They don’t care about each other’s problems. They just say that they don’t get paid to listen to “this nonsense”. Then no work gets done because it is important for a manager to listen.”*

From this statement and others it is likely that employees at shaft 10 have lost respect for higher levels of management. Perceptions of a legitimate managerial prerogative have been damaged due to employee’s sensitivity against being disrespected:

*“Sometimes he will just walk away. That is so disrespectful. Then I lose my temper. They say what they want and then leave before I can also speak my mind! Why must I say I am sorry when I never had the opportunity to speak my mind? That sorry sits in my chest.”*

The tendency to address problems in this one-sided manner causes employees to quarrel about trivial things in an attempt to “win back” some of their importance:

*“It is nitty -gritty stuff, it is just to show that they have power. “It is my way and that is just how it is going to be”. It is like “I am going to show you”. Everyone is very vindictive.”*

The **desire to display power** over fellow employees can be part of a **personality profile** that clash with other, less aggressive, interpersonal styles. The employees at the shaft name instances where interpersonal preferences cause disagreements:

*“They know that the job must be finished. They have a gap to do it properly but they were fighting about how to do it and then they went into extra time. The pressure caused them to fight more. They need to work as a team. They don’t want to talk to each other now, but at least they get the job done. I think the thing is that the one guy has a very short temper and the other guy avoids conflict. They are very different people.”*

Elements of **trait anger** are displayed when employees are asked to describe how they react to a disagreement:

*“If he is attacking I will override him. I express my rage openly.”*

*“I keep quiet because I will get violent. I will just cause you pain in the future.”*

Low levels of **emotional stability** seem to be the norm as employees either ignore their emotions or try and suppress their frustration with the situation.

*“I don’t know, I don’t focus on my emotions.”*

*“I am angry and I want to fight. I stress because I know that I cannot hit him because then I am jobless.”*

Mechanisms to constructively manage their emotions without reaching boiling point are either absent or employees simply get angry rapidly. There is the possibility that employees have become weary of the “dog-eat-dog” environment at the shaft and have resorted to open and aggressive conflict in order to ensure some form of justice and respect. **Trust** has been eroded to such a degree that the following employee describes his colleagues as “jackals”.

*“My emotions get worse when I don’t know what to do about the conflict. I can’t talk about the conflict. I can’t talk to others because they cannot keep it for themselves. News spreads like a wildfire here. They are all jackals.”*

Some employees do display the **emotional intelligence** to monitor their emotions and estimate when the conflict is getting out of hand but others bear witness to the lack of emotional regulation and appropriate emotional expression:

*“I just listen and when I don’t feel so hurt I will talk to them because I will say something I don’t want to say.”*

This employee demonstrates that she/he can monitor her/his own emotions, understand the repercussions of emotions in the situation and that he/she can attempt to understand the emotions of the other party. A stark contrast to the rare displays of emotional intelligence, most of the interviewed employees displays controlling and aggressive styles or avoiding and suppressing conflict management styles.

*“The mood is tense. People tend to be very curt with each other and emotions tend to get the better of you. Politely stated we get very emotional. Basically: “to hell with it all”.*

While personality variables can cause conflict to worsen, the **interpersonal history** of the parties also affect the tendency for the disagreement to turn into a destructive conflict situation.

*“They keep it here (points to his head) and they don’t solve it openly. It is like they are scared to “go to the principal”. I have seen grudges develop. It comes up again because you remember. You dig up old things.”*

*“There is a history of bad conflict between mining and engineering and there are communication problems where people do not listen to each other.”*

Employees at the shaft remember conflict encounters and base future interpersonal behaviour on the success or the failure with which the disagreement was resolved. In instances where the disagreement damaged the trust relationship the employees would withdraw assistance or actively sabotage attempts at addressing the problem:

*“They are not willing to help each other. They just want to do their jobs and go home. They don’t care.”*

It is evident that negative moderators and mediators within the systems model of conflict and the bureaucratic model of conflict impact on healthy employee relationships at shaft 10. From important production related issues conflicts transform into a destructive set of relationship focussed conflicts aimed at winning a vindictive game. The strife manifests into specific conflict episodes that erode trust and encourage disruption.

#### 5.3.4 MANIFEST CONFLICT

Employees can eloquently describe the ideal way in which conflict should be approached. They understand that conflict can be constructive or destructive for the organisation and for relationships depending on the way that it is managed:

*“Good conflict can create a forum where problems can be resolved. In good conflict you can think of a solution to a problem because the underlying issues have been unearthed. It then creates drive and passion to get the best solution. It is like a devil’s advocate. But conflict can also be bad. Bad conflict festers. I can observe it here. We can talk about it for 7 months and it never gets resolved.”*

Some employees did iterate that they believe conflict to be a solely destructive occurrence in organisations. Their belief seems to be based on experiences that caused long term damages to trust within working relationships. The constant stress associated with unresolved conflict cause emotional strain for the individual that he eventually associates with destructive conflict in his environment.

*“Conflict is a very bad thing... You cannot do a job with people who do not like each other. People do not want to come to work because they know that there is going to be conflict. They stress the whole time and then they get depressed.”*

When asked to describe the management style of colleagues, employees mention practices that do not contribute to constructive conflict management.

*“They just want to hit one another. They don’t want to hear any reason. They just want to sort it out with their fists. Then they walk away and they bury their anger for another day.”*

*“Once someone threw someone with a piece of metal. That was a violent outburst. It is because of constant conflict that he just snapped.”*

*“Blame shifting happens a lot. They can get furious in meetings because they throw each other with stuff and stay cross for weeks on end. Everyone just watches. The manager should step in but they also grab at each other.”*

Even though some of the interviewed employees recognise that constructive conflict management can lead to higher productivity and improved working relationships, when asked to comment on constructive conflict behaviour mostly **avoiding conflict management** styles were mentioned.

Some employees do mention that after “cooling down” you still need to resolve the conflict or face the consequences of unresolved negative emotions. Unfortunately most employees use approaches like **destructive and controlling conflict management styles** that will not facilitate resolution even if emotions are kept in check:

*“I try and get the last word in and then I just walk away. It makes people very angry but it gives me power because then I don’t explode. If they explode then I have won because I am in control. Later I will go back and try and sort it out. I push buttons because if you can get people to lose their cool you are in control.”*

*“(They have) even less communication. They say that it is “my way or the high way”. They just blame each other. Even in the meetings they scream and walk out. They butt heads every day. They smile on the outside but then they gossip.”*

Conflict management for employees at Shaft 10 would be to ignore and avoid the other party. Most employees withdraw from any “unnecessary” interaction: they try to get the job done as soon as possible in order to get away from interacting (on a personal level) with the other employee. This orientation creates an “uncaring” atmosphere that affects the conflict management styles of other employees.

*“It is normal for people here to just jump to paperwork. They don’t want to handle conflict, they just want to prosecute. They threaten people to do that as well: “I will fire you if you don’t”. It is as if they say “I am a manager and you can’t do anything to me”. They just throw power around and they don’t listen.”*

The disengagement from personal interaction and a lack of concern for the other party negatively affects interpersonal trust at the shaft.

*“Mostly it does get solved but we can see all the grudges. It is crazy. The relationship is not the same as before. It takes a long time to rebuild.”*

To this employee resolving the conflict implies that the conflict is not talked about again. He/she makes the researcher aware that most employees hold grudges, implying that the conflict was not solved, merely suppressed. Suppressing the conflict leads to even greater levels of mistrust and vindictiveness. One employee mentions that rather than sorting out the disagreement employees would resort to **sabotage and victimisation** to get back at the other employee:

*“They avoid the conflict because they are scared of being victimised. They say that there are “ways to get rid of you”. They will use safety compliance and set you up. They threaten you behind closed doors.”*

In general the atmosphere at Shaft 10 reflects a strong “concern for self” or a “concern for production” with a highly assertive management style. The tendency is for interactions to have a low “concern for people” and interpersonal relationships. In line with the “overlay of conflict resolution styles” from Holt and DeVore (2005), it is also apparent that the

employees are displaying avoiding/withdrawing or forceful/competing approaches to conflict due to the behavioural elements supporting self-centred approaches to conflict. The outcomes for conflict within this style are likely to be a win-lose approach to conflict paired with negative emotional responses (Xie et al, 1998).

### 5.3.5 OUTCOMES

Employees list many emotional, behavioural and physical outcomes to the conflict at Shaft 10. These outcomes demonstrate first order, second order and third order effects of conflict.

First order effects like “overtime”, “overly used grievance procedures”, “intentional miscommunication” and a noticeable “intention to quit” indicates that destructive conflict is extensive in this profile.

Second order effects of conflict were also apparent in the responses given by participants. Employees reported severe “emotional strain and low morale”, “avoiding behaviour”, “productivity losses” and a “loss in management time” when having to deal with the consequences of conflict.

Several third order effects of conflict were also clearly noticeable in the responses given by participants. A noted “hostile working environment”, “loss of managerial credibility”, “refusals to collaborate” and several instances of “miscommunication” were reported.

In line with expectations, employees mainly mention **aggressive emotional responses** due to a noted **defensive culture**. All of the interviewed employees mention anger, frustration and a desire to physically attack the object of their frustration. One employee mentioned feeling hurt rather than defensive but all the other employees noted severe feelings of aggression.

*“People say that attack is the best defense. They don’t want a solution; all that they see is someone attacking them personally.”*

*“(I feel) anger and frustration. I just want to hit the guy.”*

When asked to describe their emotional coping mechanisms, one employee did describe a constructive way of managing his/her negative emotions. By trying to understand the reasons for the emotional reaction of his/her fellow employee rather than reacting in an

aggressive way, the employee is constructively approaching the problem rather than focussing on the person causing him/her “trouble”. Most employees however **do not manage their emotions constructively**:

*“I build up to a crescendo and explode.”*

*“I control my emotions and walk away.”*

The way in which most of the employees manage their anger and frustration is to “let it all out” or to suppress it and avoid the person who they perceive to be causing the frustration.

In the first instance the employee negatively impacts on the culture by publically “exploding”. The **norm** is created that it is acceptable to lose your temper with another employee. If the employee would be in a managerial position he would **lose respect** as he will be perceived as “immature” and unable to manage his emotions. “Losing face” in this way negatively impacts on future attempts at giving legitimate managerial instructions; employees will simply disregard instructions as the manager will no longer be seen as having legitimate authority.

*“Yes (we lose productivity), because if they see each other fighting they get negative and then they will damage something so that they don’t have to work. Sabotage happens but you can’t prove it so you just have to let it go.”*

Losing legitimate power has happened to past managers and employees do remember the effects that an aggressive conflict style had on the acceptance of managerial prerogative:

*“...He was very green. He needs to be guided or he will move from a mover to a destroyer. He tried to get production up but he approached it in a very attacking way. He gets peoples backs up. He micromanagers and has no tact. I could see it in a few seconds. He makes ridiculous comments and the team started to revolt. He needed to be moved because he could not change his approach.”*

When employees avoid the conflict (possibly due to an inability to manage the negative emotions that they experience) the conflict remains “unresolved” and the tension impacts on the employee’s emotional and vocational **wellbeing**:

*“Failure to address the conflict will increase the negativity. There are always issues between the teams. There is underlying tension. Some might say it is because they are jealous of our salaries and others might say that they don’t have any standard. It is bad competition.”*

The physical effects of long term unresolved conflict on the employees are painfully noticeable. Some employees mention medication while others mention serious affections like stomach ulcers and heart problems:

*“I drink a lot of relaxation pills. I can never do anything right. They want to do what they want to do and they treat you like trash. But I can’t do anything to stand up for myself because I will get fired.”*

*“I smoke a lot but at least I have stopped the drinking.”*

*“I have medicine for the stomach sores but I have ended up in hospital.”*

None of the employees seem to have any plans in place for managing conflict related stress outside of medical assistance, drugs or short term attempts at managing the symptoms of unresolved conflict in their environment. Treating the symptoms of the problem and not the problem itself has significant effects on the employee’s wellbeing. **Spill-over effects** into other spheres of life is mentioned by most of the employees:

*“I go home and I can’t forget. I have trouble sleeping and I stress about going to work...They don’t care about you as a person.”*

*“It is like a pain on my chest. You stay worried and you stay stressed about it because you don’t know what is happening behind your back.”*

*“If you cut your foot and you just go on it festers. It gets worse and you lose your foot. That is what happens here. We talk about things but no one implements. It never truly gets solved. People go to bed angry.”*

Emotionally and physically the effects of conflict have significant implications for the employee’s wellbeing at the shaft. Unfortunately the behavioural reactions to manifest conflict are equally destructive.

*“I retract from giving my best because if I end up doing the shitty jobs. They take over on everything else. My experience means nothing. They don’t trust me to do my job.”*



*“The employees are leaving in masses. They take a lot of heat and they stress and then they get to a point where they just don’t care anymore. I can’t take this crap anymore. I do not like the fighting. This mine solves things with complaints. Everyone feels victimised. All of the conflict gets solved formally, in a grievance. They are too scared to discuss it openly.”*

Amongst the interviewed employees there is a severe **turnover intention** due to the toxic environment. Those who do not leave, intend to “collect pay checks” and completely **disengage** from work. The employees are aware of the fact that the conflict at the shaft is negatively impacting **performance and productivity**:

*“Productivity goes down. You won’t go the extra mile; you only do what you need to do to keep out of trouble. You are not working towards a shared goal anymore.”*

*“Yes, even in meetings conflict delays the meetings and the outcomes are not reached.”*

As before mentioned; the interpersonal **trust** at shaft 10 has been completely eroded. The constant destructive conflict encourages counter productivity in working relationships. Intentional **miscommunication** and **sabotage** is rife.

*“It is a breach of trust. The working relationship is no longer open to that person. If I have something to share I won’t. There might be some information but teamwork is gone.”*

*“The whole time it gets worse but you cannot pinpoint who is targeting you. They do it in such a way that you cannot point fingers. They intentionally do things wrong and they refuse to help each other causing avoidable breakdowns.”*

Destructive conflict has **degenerated relationships** to such an extent that the employees have completely given up on mending fissures in working relationships. They have severed all attempts at observing and trying to manage each other’s emotions and show a total disregard for the wellbeing of their fellow employee:

*“I can see that he experiences the same stuff as you do but I don’t give a shit.”*

*“I don’t care. As long as he gets into trouble. Someone else can sort it out.”*

Problems with **absenteeism** have been recorded at the shaft and interviewed employees mention conflict as one of the causes for the “abuse of sick leave”. It was surprising that the link between conflict and absenteeism was not more pronounced. There is the possibility

that the participants do not see stress and conflict related strain as having a distinct, yet indirect effect on absenteeism.

*“People are often absent, they abuse alcohol because there is a lack of social activities in the area to reduce the stress.”*

The strain experienced by employees spill over into other spheres of their lives causing them to link family problems and depression to the atmosphere at the shaft. This link in turn makes employees apprehensive to come to work and **decreases commitment** to the company.

*“The company says that it puts people first but the atmosphere here works on me at home to. It mixes with my family life.”*

A decrease in commitment due to the manner in which conflict is managed is felt top-down but also bottom-up as lower levels target the upper levels of management:

*“They run to the union very quickly for formal action. They threaten each other with formal action against them.”*

It is highly likely that the tendency for the employees at Shaft 10 to turn to formal action in order to deal with their interpersonal conflicts will be reflected in a high disciplinary and grievance rate.

When employees turn to formal conflict resolution processes as a way of threatening each other and resolving petty conflicts it is likely that interpersonal conflict resolution skills are lacking. Often informal facilitation can solve conflicts where emotions have caused communication breakdowns.

*“It would be better if an external party could say: “come here, let us get it right”. If someone at the shaft gets involved they are also dragged into the conflict. It will only work if the person is respected. There is no respect for one another here.”*

Unfortunately it seems as though most employees and managers at the shaft have disengaged, trust has been eroded and therefore employees simply do not wish to get involved.

*“I would like to help my team members but the fight then becomes my problem. The issues always get escalated. Everyone gets involved and suddenly it goes to the top level. No one wants to take responsibility, they just escalate.”*

To the researcher and the interviewed employees, interactions at Shaft 10 resemble *“stepping on a landmine and hoping it won’t explode”*. One employee summarises the general atmosphere by saying:

*“Conflict is permanent; it is there under the surface waiting to erupt.”*

### 5.3.6 CALCULATIONS

Data gathered from the completed survey questionnaires at Shaft 10 were used to calculate the conflict costs relating to working time, anticipated replacement costs and formal conflict resolution costs. The costing computations were made using the data gained from the questionnaire as well as data collected on the HR management system, SAP (see Table 4.4 on page 97).

#### 5.3.6.1 COSTS RELATING TO WORKING TIME

This study investigated the time loss reported by participants with regards to absenteeism and presenteeism due to conflict. The time loss due to intentional miscommunication (seen as a form of sabotage) is also included as a cost relating to working time incurred due to conflict.

The following graph (Figure 5.1) depicts the participant’s individual answers to “hours lost due to administration relating to absenteeism” as well as “time lost while compensating for absent employees responsibilities”.

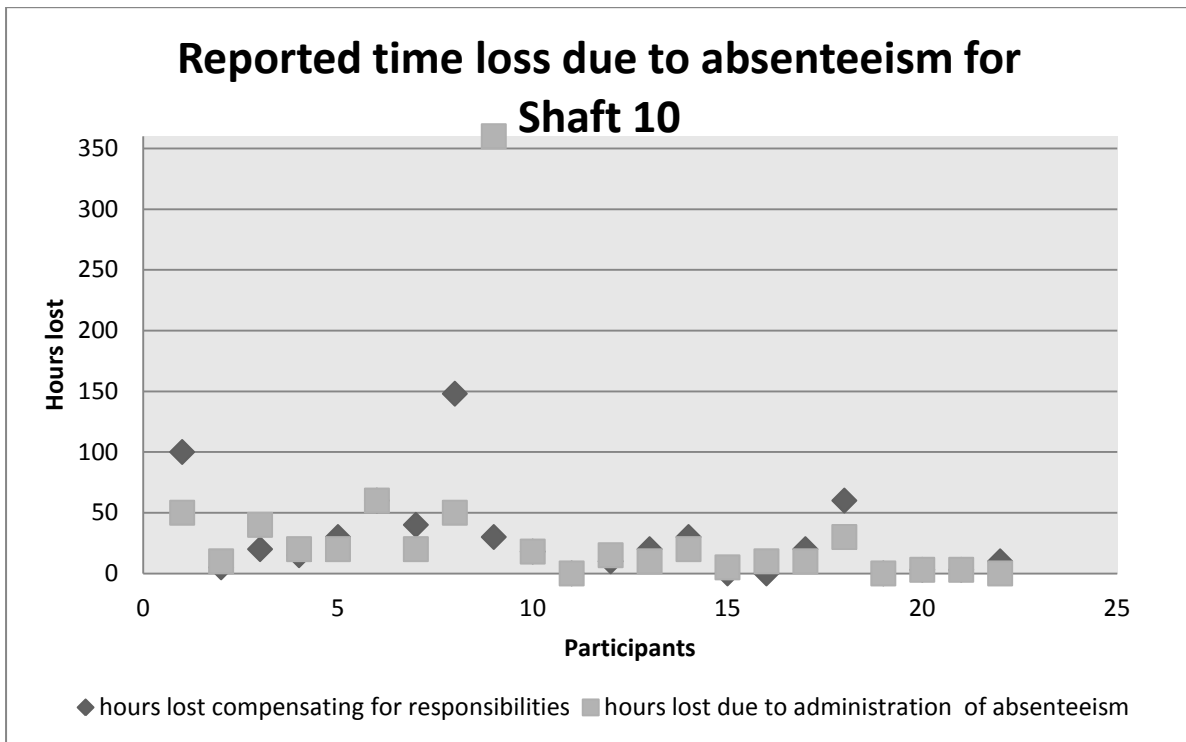


Figure 5.1. Individual responses to lost time due to absenteeism at Shaft 10

The graph is included to show that except for a few outlying values the majority of participants reported similar experiences. The majority of participants reported 0 to 50 hours of lost time due to employee absenteeism.

The reported loss in time due to conflict related absenteeism is summarised in Table 5.2.

Table 5.2. Costs relating to absenteeism at Shaft 10

<b>Shaft 10 absenteeism cost due to conflict</b>			
Cost element	Hours lost due to conflict related absenteeism	Hours lost due to administration of absenteeism due to conflict	Hours lost compensating for the responsibilities of employees avoiding conflict
Reported time loss due to absenteeism	2368 hours 296 days	754 hours or 94.25 days	622 hours or 77.75 days
Total cost	R395 859.31		

The total cost of conflict relating to absenteeism at Shaft 10 amounts to R395 859.31 for 2012. This cost is a summation of the reported time lost due to conflict per participant at Shaft 10.

Figure 5.2 depicts the individual answers of participants to the four questions relating to presenteeism. Participants reported on the following unproductive actions: “foot dragging”, “ruminating on conflict”, “lost meeting time” and “cooling down” after conflict.

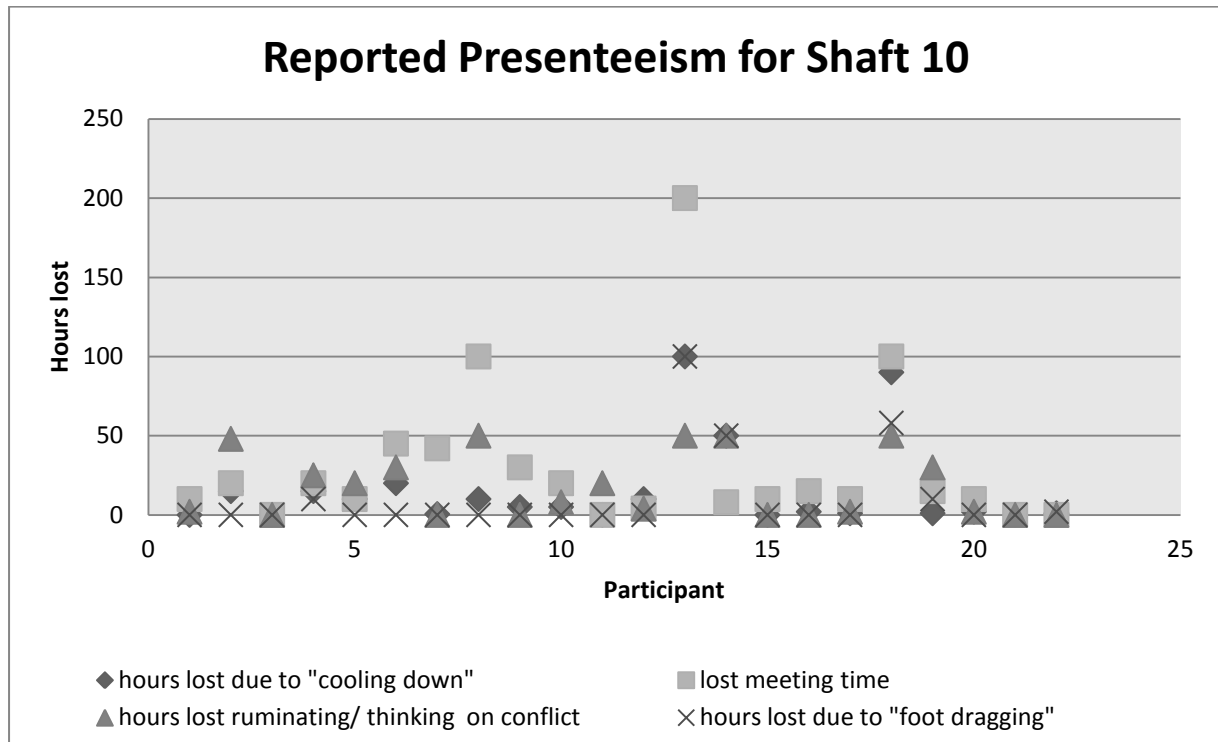


Figure 5.2. Individual responses to lost time due to conflict related presenteeism at Shaft 10

Surprisingly very few participants report “foot dragging” or “going slow” as a means of compensating for unfair conflict. One employee reported a very high amount of lost meeting time where most of the other participants reported between 0 and 100 hours of lost meeting time in 2012. Most participants report between 0 and 50 hours spent on ruminating on conflict and spending working time on “cooling down” respectively.

The reported loss in working time due to presenteesm is summarised in Table 5.3.

Table 5.3. Costs relating to presenteeism at Shaft 10

<b>Shaft 10 presenteeism due to conflict</b>				
Cost element	Hours lost due to "foot dragging"	Hours lost due to "cooling down"	Lost meeting time due to unproductive conflict	Hours lost while ruminating/ thinking on conflict
Reported presenteeism	230	337.5	669	391
Total cost	R 767 412.96			

The total cost of presenteeism at Shaft 10 is R 767 412.96. The most costly form of presenteeism in this conflict profile is meeting time being spent on unproductive conflict.

The participants' account of total time lost due to instances of intentional miscommunication is summarised in Table 5.4.

Table 5.4. Costs relating to sabotage at Shaft 10

<b>Sabotage costs at Shaft 10</b>	
Cost element	Hours lost due to reported intentional miscommunication
Reported intentional miscommunication	402 hours
Total cost	R223 183.02

The total cost of sabotage in this conflict profile is estimated at to R223 183.02. This estimate of sabotage only reflects "intentional miscommunication" as a form of passive aggressive conflict behaviour. The true cost of sabotage in this conflict profile is likely to be higher when e.g. vandalism or gossiping is included.

The total cost of conflict behaviour at Shaft 10 includes absenteeism, presenteeism and intentional miscommunication as a form of sabotage. The monetary value that can be linked to the reported loss in employee time is **R138 6455.29** for the 22 participants at Shaft 10. Conflict related presenteeism contributes the most to the overall total.

### 5.3.6.2 ANTICIPATED SEPARATION AND REPLACEMENT COSTS

Most of the participants at Shaft 10 indicated that they intend to terminate employment with the organisation due to conflict in their working environment. 46% of participants indicated a moderate intent to terminate employment whereas 32% indicated that they think about terminating employment at least once a week. 17 employees out of the total of 22 participants reported intent to sever employment due to conflict situations as soon as an opportunity presents itself.

Based on the percentage of participants reporting the intent to find alternative employment due to conflict in the environment, a future cost associated with employee separations could be estimated. Table 5.5 summarises the cost implications of future employee separations if the conflict profile at Shaft 10 does not change.

Table 5.5. Costs relating to future employee separations at Shaft 10

<b>Potential future employee separations due to conflict at Shaft 10</b>					
Cost element	Replacement costs	Separation costs	Induction costs	Training costs	Performance difference
Costs associated with employee intent to separate with the organisation due to conflict	R881 135.03	R4441.20	R254 203.73	R816 0806.27	R625 8833.96
<b>Total cost</b>	<b>R904 6382.50</b>				

The most prominent loss associated with an employee separating from the company is the investment made to train that employee. A potential investment loss of approximately R881 135.03 is expected due to conflict experienced at Shaft 10. The second largest loss is the difference in performance expected between the established employee leaving the organisation and a new employee filling the position. The ramp-up time and orientation associated with new appointments contribute to this high cost.

The total cost of possible future employee separations is estimated to be **R 904 6382.50** if the conflict profile at Shaft 10 does not improve.

### 5.3.6.3 FORMAL CONFLICT RESOLUTION COSTS

Formal methods for resolving organisational conflict include counselling, grievance procedures, disciplinary action, CCMA cases and legal action.

Participants were asked to report on the total time they have spent on formal conflict resolution in 2012 alone. Participants were asked to report any settlement costs awarded to them in a dispute against the organisation.

Figure 5.3 depicts the responses of participants to the amount of time that they spent on formal conflict resolution at Shaft 10.

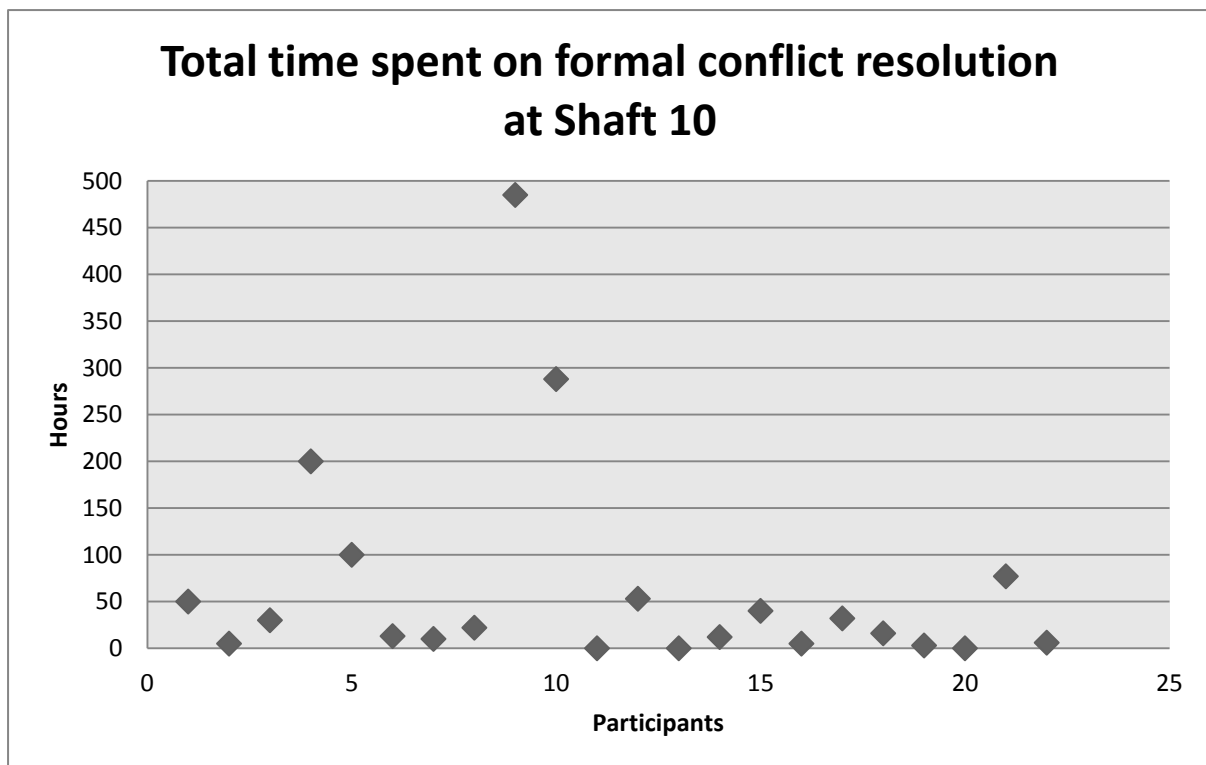


Figure 5.3. Individual responses to time spent on formal conflict resolution at Shaft 10

The outlying values in Figure 5.3 are not surprising. It is expected that some employees will be more involved with the discipline of subordinates than others. This can be due to some supervisors having to ensure discipline is maintained amongst a larger pool of subordinates. It is also expected that HR, being the custodians of the process, will be involved in most of the disciplinary actions taken at the Shaft.



Table 5.6 summarises the total hours spent by participants on formal conflict resolution during 2012. The amount of hours was used in computations estimating the cost associated with formal conflict resolution per individual at the Shaft.

Table 5.6. Costs relating to formal conflict resolution at Shaft 10

<b>Formal conflict resolution costs at Shaft 10</b>		
Cost element	Total hours spent on formal conflict resolution	Settlement costs
Costs due to formal conflict	1447	0
Total cost	R789 131.08	

Participants report a large amount of time being spent on managing conflict through formal conflict resolution mechanisms at Shaft 10. They report that no settlement costs were paid to them in any dispute during 2012. The total cost of time lost due to formal conflict resolution amounts to **R789 131.08**.

#### 5.3.6.4 THE ESTIMATED TOTAL COST OF CONFLICT AT SHAFT 10

Estimating the total cost of conflict at Shaft 10 requires an addition of the costs relating to working time to the formal conflict resolution costs. The cost of possible future separations is not added to the total cost of conflict at the Shaft as this is simply a precautionary calculation and cannot be regarded as expense until the employee formally terminates employment.

Table 5.7 lists the individual cost estimations added to estimate the total cost of conflict at Shaft 10.

Table 5.7. The total cost of conflict at Shaft 10

<b>The total cost of conflict at Shaft 10</b>				
Cost element	Absenteeism	Presenteeism	Sabotage	Formal conflict costs
Total cost estimation	R395 859.31	R 767 412.96	R223 183.02	R789 131.08
Total cost of conflict	R 217 5586.37			

The total cost of conflict at Shaft 10 can be estimated at R 217 5586.37 for 2012.

## 5.4 CONFLICT PROFILE: SHAFT 8

The following case study is compiled using the information gathered from interviews with members of Shaft 8. The Interview Guide is attached as Appendix E.

The results of the interviews have been analysed and the responses of the members have been purposefully used in order to describe the case with reference to the Systems conflict model and the Bureaucratic conflict model.

### 5.4.1 PRE-REQUISITES

At both Shaft 8 and Shaft 10 the division of power and line of authority are entrenched within the organisational structure.

Some instances of disregarded authority are reported by the participants as a source of frustration:

*“If they use the line management properly and not jump the line of authority the conflict will be less. Management does not have the personality knowledge that I have of my team. If you address it with that knowledge you get double done.”*

Participants who experience these miscommunications also iterate a perception that middle management is not trusted to ensure that the desired outcomes are achieved. They are of the opinion that instances of “micromanaging” makes people resistant to change and negatively affects goal achievement.

All of the participants indicated that they perceive instances of miscommunication to be one of the main frustrations at the Shaft. The need to interact and coordinate activities amplifies the potential for conflict to erupt from intentional and unintentional miscommunications.

Job profiles necessitate regular interaction amongst employees in order to ensure that joint job outcomes are met. Participants explain that they are aware of the interdependence as well as how conflict can affect achievement:

*“100% of production is affected by conflict. If we fix things ourselves we are motivated...I can ask my people anything and they will assist. I build confidence in my ability to help them. I don't have to explain everything because they trust me.”*

Examples of goal incongruence were not expressed by participants as a daily hindrance - most employees feel that their goals are the same; they just had different opinions on how to approach it.

*"[We] definitely [have the same goals] but the difference lies in your priorities. We want everything in our sections to run smoothly but we want to get there in different ways."*

All the prerequisites of conflict are present at Shaft 8 but the prominent trends that might create conflict rest on instances of perceived disregarded legitimate authority.

#### 5.4.2 SOURCES OF CONFLICT

Participants made reference to mostly procedural and task related conflict:

*"... Conflict is inherently good because if we don't question we won't get anywhere. The conflicts that we experience are purely process issues and we can get to a good result."*

*"[Conflict]... is a disagreement on the road to achieving the same goal. Especially at this shaft. We know what we want to do but we disagree on the priorities and the road."*

Participants repeatedly express that they do not perceive conflict at the shaft to be "out of hand". They believe it to be a necessary step in achieving a mutual understanding. This reinforces the findings in research that portray **task driven and procedural conflict** as "constructive conflict".

Participants do mention instances of conflict that have the potential to cause destructive results. These instances are confined to "exceptions" or "troublemakers":

*"Certain personalities will just disagree with absolutely everything. They create conflict. It is purely the approach to the problem and the way that you try and solve things that can cause conflict... [you cannot just]... hit the problem with a hammer."*

*"If it is a high level of conflict I tend to move away and let it cool down first. But that has only happened twice in my 16 years here."*

The sources of conflict mentioned by the participants at shaft 8 are isolated to task and procedural conflict. Participants mention **relationship focused conflict** but none of their examples indicate that the personalised disagreements are anything but the inevitable result of a social system with diversity and interaction:

*“Conflict can be personal or it can be job related. Personal conflict is very difficult but we try and sort it out.”*

Occasional instances of mismanaged conflict create the perception of disrespect. In instances where employees perceive to be disregarded by management they lose trust in the ability of management to have their best interests at heart. When employees mistrust each other, the potential for destructive conflict increases.

*“Like this morning; if you don’t give people the opportunity to talk then it makes the conflict worse. You need to listen. It happens often; they should keep quiet and listen to the problem. Give everyone an opportunity to talk.”*

All three sources of conflict in the systems model are present in this conflict profile: relationship focused conflict, task driven related conflict and procedural conflict can be observed. The fourth source of conflict within the Bureaucratic model of conflict, *divergent expectations of control*, were not observed as a prominent source of conflict in this conflict profile but employees did mention instances of disregarded authority playing a role in conflict at the Shaft.

Several mediators and moderators will determine whether the potential conflict will become destructive or constructive.

#### 5.4.3 MEDIATORS AND MODERATORS

In Chapter 2 it was indicated that moderating and mediating effects can give conflict a positive or a negative direction irrespective of the source of conflict. Even basic task related conflict, initiated to achieve goal clarity, can become personalised and turn anticipated constructive outcomes into grudges and sabotage.

As previously discussed, Shaft 8 has many instances of task and procedural conflict but most of them are resolved constructively. The manner in which conflict is addressed increases the **perceived resolution potential** of future conflicts:

*“There are no examples of conflict that has not been resolved. Conflict is good because you can sort it out. In the process you set boundaries and understand each other better.”*

The perceived resolution potential is therefore affected by the **history of relations** between the parties. The interviewed participants are aware of an age old feud between the Mining

and the Engineering fraternity that might adversely affect the resolution potential of conflict between employees from opposing departments.

*"... Between mining and engineering there is a feud but it is manageable. People are quite tolerant. We try to support each other. We are not patient people but we tolerate others. There are some things that mining can do that can make me very upset but overall the atmosphere is good."*

The interpersonal interaction history of employees can also dictate the manner in which conflicts are addressed; a negative interaction history can cause future conflicts to be approached defensively despite case merit. Often negative interactions are blamed on personality (which in turn affects conflict handling style):

*"There are some individuals that make problems... There are some instigators though. They are not wrong; it is just their way of doing things. We have a good atmosphere; it is relaxed and we produce. It is all about people skills."*

Overall employees in this conflict profile are tolerant despite observed interpersonal collisions. They see conflict as **important** production related instances of disagreement that need to be solved in order to produce optimally:

*"The conflict is always important. Except one guy that can make a mountain of a mole heap. 90% of the time it is production related and we have to solve it to get a mutual understanding. I like conflict because it is good conflict."*

Despite the positive instances of well managed conflict participants make mention of **poor communication** that result in a "blame game". These instances cause petty conflict to become unnecessary time wasting events.

*"... It is a small thing that explodes. It all goes back to communication..."*

*"Petty nonsense. Most things are small. Most arguments is because someone is blaming someone else. No one wants to take responsibility. It happens at least once a day..."*

Employees are aware that ideally they should sort out the conflict before it reaches the stage of becoming a passive aggressive blame game. Everyone does not necessarily succeed and instances of "pay-back" are perceived by participants to happen often.

*“You state your case calmly. It is always better to be discreet and do it in private. But if he takes me on in front of a crowd he deserves the same treatment.”*

*“... They are always ready to fight back the facts. They attack you because they see you as attacking them. It is like pay back and it happens often.”*

In this conflict profile “treating people as you would like to be treated” is perceived as an effective way of addressing conflict. Most participants indicated that they would like to have conflict sorted out as soon as possible and in private so that none of the parties “lose face”. Even though no severe instances of overt conflict behaviour were observed many instances of passive aggressive behaviour (as a method of getting back at the other party) was expressed by participants.

#### 5.4.4 MANIFEST CONFLICT

Examples of manifest conflict expressed by the participants do not lead the researcher to believe that conflict at the shaft is at a boiling point. Some instances of negative conflict handling skills were talked about but mostly conflict does get resolved at an early stage.

Conflict that does reach a point where negative emotions cloud effective judgement is dealt with after the employees “cool down”. This facilitates open conversation rather than encouraging defensive actions.

*“I cannot speak for the others but I can see that some people are overworked and then we cannot get to everything...it has to be done “NOW”. One time it was not done as they wanted and the guy took me on. It was a huge argument but we also know how to resolve it. It got out of hand bad. I did not want to speak to him for a week but that was good because it let him cool down and then we could resolve it behind closed doors. We understand each other but the way that he approached it was wrong. Maybe I was also wrong.”*

The most prominent conflict handling action that is facilitating open and effective conflict resolution in this conflict profile, is the willingness of participants to acknowledge the difficulties experienced by others. Even when they are frustrated and angry, participants mention that they take the other individual into account in order to get to a mutually beneficial outcome indicating some effective **collaboration** attempts:

*“You get to know people and then you know what to do. If they get upset give him a beverage. It gives him time to think and to cool down. Most people are calm though.”*

*“Normally you call them into the office, listen to their stories and try and figure out the main reasons for the conflict.”*

The emotional intelligence displayed by the participants indicate that the employees at the shaft are able to listen to what the other party is saying and effectively respond based on accurate interpretations of the emotions that they are experiencing. They are able to manage the negative emotions of the other party in order to establish trust and understanding.

*“If the supervisor does not stay calm then they will run and put a grievance against him or they will go over your head and complain to a person higher than you. It happened only once to me. I have learned to support and now I do better. We know that you need to bond with your subordinates. Everyone is human and you need to be fair.”*

There are instances of **avoidance in conflict handling** styles expressed by participants. These instances mainly involved loading the grievance system and jumping authority.

*“Power is a big thing. They try and win the argument. Some of them just give up. Agreeing with everything is just as bad as conflict.”*

*“If the supervisor does not stay calm then they will run and put a grievance against him or they will go over your head and complain to a person higher than you.”*

The participants describe these behavioural tendencies to be characteristic of lower levels in the organisational structure. One participant said that *“Higher levels talk calmly and they listen to each other. The lower levels shout”*. The sample group will however experience some of the repercussions due to the conflict handling methods of co-workers not necessarily included in the sample as they will have the responsibility of disciplining subordinates, attending grievance resolution and resolving conflicts that could have been resolved at a lower level of authority.

Becoming involved in dysfunctional conflict can have negative outcomes for all the parties involved as well as the emotional atmosphere of the shaft. These outcomes can have a severe financial impact on the organisation.

### 5.4.5 OUTCOMES

The participants at Shaft 8 mention several outcomes to conflict similar to that of Shaft 10 but the manner in which they manage the consequences differ significantly.

One participant mentions that the manner in which conflict is addressed will “*differ from department to department*” and this is indeed evident in the response set: very positive examples of constructive conflict outcomes are given but also some very negative responses are shared.

The destructive effects of conflict, even though limited in comparison to the first conflict profile, can be broken down into first order, second order and third order effects:

The first order effects that participants mentioned include a “miscommunication”, “time loss” and some minor “turnover intention”. Noted in the response set were evidence of second order effects like “emotional strain” and avoiding behavior”. Some “loss of management time” is expected due to intentional miscommunication. Third order effects like a “loss in management credibility”, “mistrust” and a “refusal to collaborate” can also be observed.

The emotional, behavioral and physical effects of conflict experienced by the participants at the shaft show the following trends:

Participants mention that they feel anger and frustration in a conflict episode but the negative emotions are managed by taking the other party into consideration. One participant states that he “*wants to see [the other person’s] point of view first*”. The negative emotions that the employees experience are not always managed constructively and some employees mention avoidance as a default option to managing experienced conflict:

*“I remember what happened and I try to avoid the guy at all costs.”*

*“I will walk away and try and avoid it. I just do the job and try and avoid the emotions. I know that I am right and that is ok. If the other person does not see it, it is not my problem.”*

**Avoidance behaviour** does seem to have an impact on the culture at the shaft and participants report that they are confronted with “*the silent treatment*” even though



employees are aware that avoiding the conflict and/or the person is not a constructive way of dealing with the issue.

Most employees state that even though they might be angry they *“cannot just attack them even though [they] feel like it. [they know that] they need to talk it out”*. The general feeling is that it is beneficial to get all the facts before you engage in a conflict discussion as there might be underlying issues that can complicate the matter:

*“I like to consider all the facts and get both sides of the story. Data is your best friend.”*

The participants display some emotional maturity in the sense that they can notice and manage their own and others emotions in order to reach a mutually beneficial outcome. Whether employees prefer to *“calm down and... drink a cool drink... [to give themselves] time to think”* or prefer to *“walk to someone [they trust] and debrief”*, they are able to effectively ensure that negative emotions do not hinder the resolution process:

*“I stay conscious of my body and my emotions. When I realise that it is getting out of control I remind myself that it is not worth the frustration. It is part of being in the game for a long time.”*

*“Do not ignore people. It offends them. Try and resolve it as soon as possible. If the emotions are very heated cool down and assess the emotional environment first before you talk again.”*

Due to the fact that the employees manage their emotions effectively the **emotional strain** that they might have experienced in different circumstances are significantly less. Participants mention that although they feel some of the effects of conflict after the conflict has been resolved, the negative emotions disappear relatively soon and are replaced with feelings of relief. Some of the participants however mention lingering headaches and lasting damage to the working relationship as trust was damaged in the process.

Even though conflict is not exclusively destructive in this conflict profile employees do mention that in some instances **cooperation is reduced** as a negative effect of conflict:

*“No one wins. Personally it is frustrating and it makes me less co-operative. The other person as well. The relationship becomes tarnished.”*

*“Production is lower. You won’t go out of your way to help someone. You just do what you have to, to stay out of trouble.”*

Other negative effects that are mentioned include instances of “gossiping” and discussions of “troublemakers” in meetings. These instances of **passive aggressive behavior** can only aggravate the situation as the parties involved might feel “emotionally belittled”.

In severe instances one participant reports how single individuals threaten the health and safety of other employees. In situations where **trust** no longer encourages open communication and parties have **lost faith** in joint resolution, destructive conflict outcomes are to be expected. The manner in which this employee manages his emotions and especially the frustration he experiences, he completely breaks down the communication channels that can assist in resolving the original issue:

*“This one time one of the employees was not paid correctly and I did not have time to follow up. The employee got very frustrated. He went over my head and then I started to stress. We had a fight because he cannot wait. He does not believe me when I said I am trying. He thinks I am lying. He had no patience. I don’t know how to address that guy. Maybe someone else can address him. He just fights. He can even kill me. No one wants to work with him. I don’t know what is wrong with him.”*

The participants also reflect on a general tendency for different levels of employees to show disrespect towards formal authority. Even though the sample group does not report any instances of disrespect toward each other they do express frustration at other employee levels.

*“I can see that there is no respect for formal positions anymore. You will be busy with a meeting and they will just interrupt. They say things that are disrespectful and they are negative.”*

Disruptions in meetings, even though mentioned as a resolved hindrance, show that the lack of restraint in formal meeting procedures might be a behavioral example that was set by management in the past.

*“In a recent meeting there was a big argument about how to issue vehicles.... He generated a lot of emotions that were completely unnecessary. We waste a lot of time in unproductive meetings. After the conflict interventions, meetings have become structured and we waste less time.”*

In line with the expectations that stark differences exist between the departments and the manner in which they address conflict, other participants accurately reflect constructive conflict management skills that effectively mitigate the destructive outcomes of conflict:

*“We are expected to have the conflict resolved as soon as possible so that the conflict does not multiply and get more people involved. I agree with that. The less conflict the more production.”*

*“They may express their emotions but they may not get angry. You are expected to say what you believe but you are not allowed to be rude.”*

The outcomes of conflict in this conflict profile are varied and even though several instances of effectively managed conflict can be observed, some destructive conflict elements do exist. These destructive conflict outcomes are expected to reflect a financial cost.

#### 5.4.6 CALCULATIONS

19 participants from Shaft 8 submitted the survey questionnaire. Their responses were used to calculate the conflict costs relating to working time, anticipated replacement costs and formal conflict resolution costs for the conflict profile at Shaft 8.

##### 5.4.6.1 COSTS RELATING TO WORKING TIME

Participants at Shaft 8 were asked to report on the time loss incurred due to absenteeism and presenteeism behaviour as a result of experienced conflict. They were also asked to report on experienced intentional miscommunication as a form of sabotage.

The following graph (Figure 5.4) depicts the participant’s individual answers to “hours lost due to administration relating to absenteeism” as well as “time lost while compensating for absent employees responsibilities”.

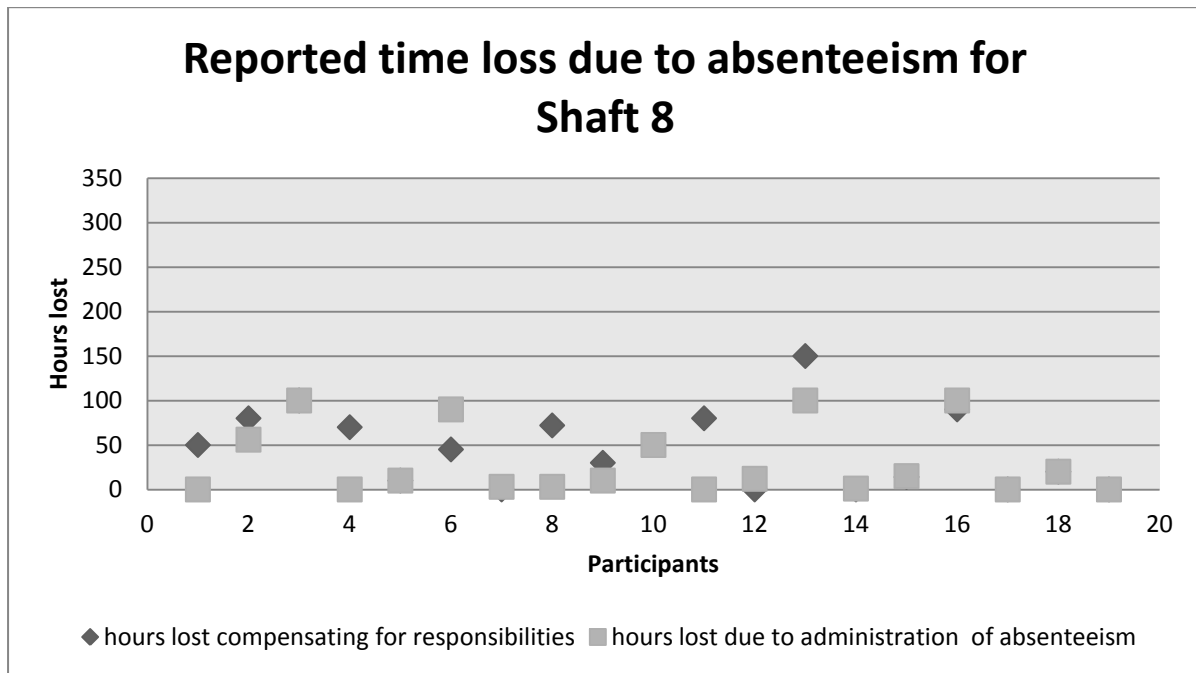


Figure 5.4. Individual responses to lost time due to absenteeism at Shaft 8

Figure 5.4 demonstrates that all of the participants at Shaft 8 experience the similar amounts of time loss due to employee absenteeism related to conflict. Most of the participants report 0 to 100 hours lost. Some employees do not seem to lose much time on absenteeism administration while others report to have lost up to 100 hours in 2012. Only one employee reports that he/she has not lost any time compensating for another employees responsibility.

The reported loss in time due to conflict related absenteeism is summarised in Table 5.8.

Table 5.8. Costs relating to absenteeism at Shaft 8

<b>Shaft 8 absenteeism cost due to conflict</b>			
Cost element	Hours lost due to conflict related absenteeism	Hours lost due to administration of absenteeism that is due to conflict	Hours lost compensating for the responsibilities of employees avoiding conflict
Reported time loss due to absenteeism	1328 hours or 166 days	570 hours or 71.25 days	861 hours or 107.63 days
Total cost	R280 043.42		

The total cost of conflict related absenteeism at Shaft 8 is R280 043.42 for 2012. This total was calculated based on the reported time lost due to conflict related absenteeism per participant at Shaft 8.

The most significant loss in time reported by the participants is the days that are lost due to subordinates being absent in an attempt to avoid conflict. Directly related to the absenteeism rate is the amount of time spent on absenteeism administration. Also directly related to employee absenteeism is the necessity to compensate for the absent employee's responsibilities to ensure that production does not suffer.

Figure 5.5 depicts the participant's individual answers to the four questions relating to presenteeism.

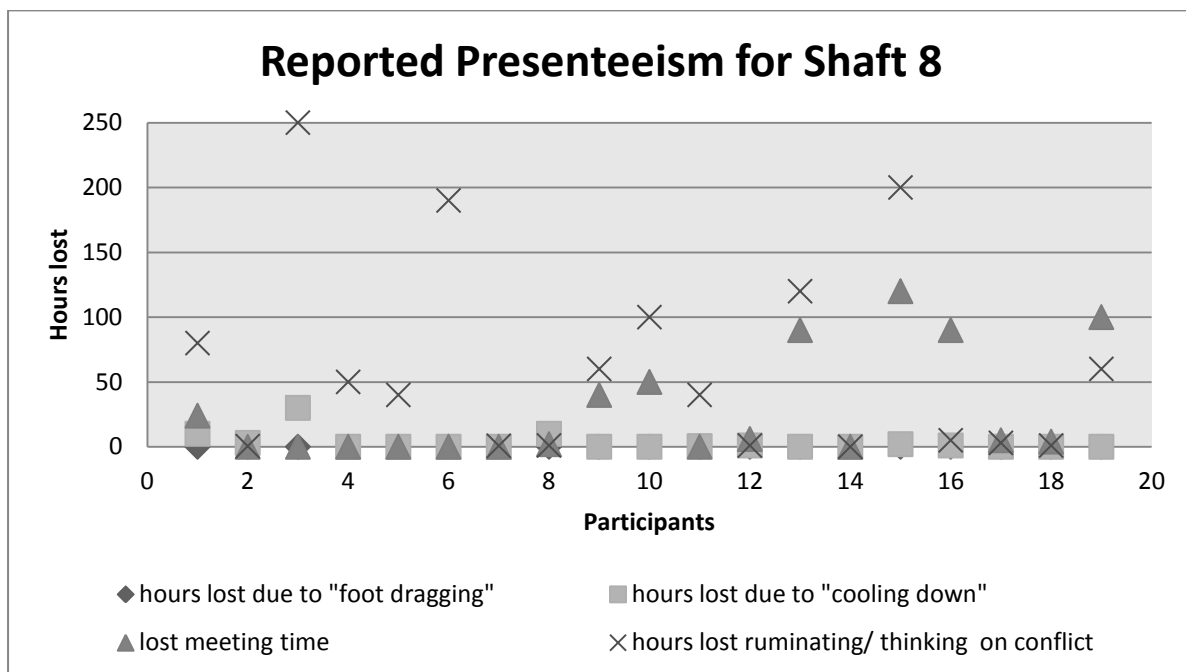


Figure 5.5. Individual responses to lost time due to conflict related presenteeism at Shaft 8

None of the Shaft 8 participants report "foot dragging" or "going slow" as a means of compensating for unfair conflict. Very few participants report having lost working time while "cooling down" after conflict. Three participants reported a high amount of time spent thinking on conflict where most of the other participants reported between 20 and 120 hours of lost time thinking of conflict at Shaft 8 in 2012.

Table 5.9 summarises the loss in working time due to presenteeism reported by participants at Shaft 8. Participants reported on the following unproductive actions: “foot dragging”, “ruminating on conflict”, “lost meeting time” and “cooling down” after conflict.

Table 5.9. Costs relating to presenteeism at Shaft 8

<b>Shaft 8 presenteeism due to conflict</b>				
Cost element	Hours lost due to "foot dragging"	Hours lost due to "cooling down"	Lost meeting time due to unproductive conflict	Hours lost while ruminating/ thinking on conflict
Reported presenteeism	0	57.5	531	1202.25
Total cost	R 831 295.30			

The total cost of presenteeism at Shaft 8 is R 831 295.30. This amount is vastly more than the reported costs associated with absenteeism. The most costly form of presenteeism in this conflict profile is “ruminating” on conflict. The hours employees report thinking about conflict and how to deal with conflict at Shaft 8 is much higher than any of the other reported forms of presenteeism behaviour.

Table 5.10 summarises the total time lost due to instances of intentional miscommunication experienced by participants at Shaft 8.

Table 5.10. Costs relating to sabotage at Shaft 8

<b>Sabotage costs at Shaft 8</b>	
Cost element	Hours lost due to reported intentional miscommunication
Reported sabotage	1342
Total cost	R 782 433.72

The total cost of sabotage reported in this study only reflects instances of reported “intentional miscommunication” yet the amount of time reported to be lost due to this passive aggressive conflict behaviour is very high. The cost of sabotage in this conflict profile is R 782 433.72.

The total cost of conflict behaviour at Shaft 8 includes absenteeism, presenteeism and intentional miscommunication as a form of sabotage. The monetary value that can be linked to the reported loss in employee time is a staggering **R 189 3772.46** for the 19 participants at Shaft 8. Sabotage costs and presenteeism related to conflict is the most significant contributors.

#### 5.4.6.2 ANTICIPATED SEPARATION AND REPLACEMENT COSTS

The majority of participants, 42%, at Shaft 8, indicated that they have no intent to terminate employment with the organisation due to conflict. 37% of participants indicated a moderate intent to terminate employment where only 21% indicated that they think about terminating employment at least once a week.

If the conflict profile at Shaft 8 does not improve, it is likely that 7 out of the 19 participants will terminate employment with the company due to conflict in their working environment.

Table 5.11 summarises the cost implications of future employee separations if the conflict profile at Shaft 8 does not improve.

Table 5.11. Costs relating to future employee separations at Shaft 8

<b>Potential future employee separations due to conflict at Shaft 8</b>					
Cost element	Replacement costs	Separation costs	Induction costs	Training costs	Performance difference
Costs associated with employee intent to separate with the organisation due to conflict	R 406 765.60	R 1828.72	R 104 672.12	R234 9421.32	R150 9308.05
Total cost	R 275 8015.66				

In this participant group the most prominent loss due to employee separations due to conflict is the time and money spent on finding replacements for the separated employee. The second largest potential loss is the training investment of approximately R234 9421.32 made to up-skill the employees who have reflected a desire to leave the company due to the conflict at Shaft 8.

The total cost of possible future employee separations is estimated to be **R 275 8015.66** at Shaft 8 if the experiences of destructive conflict amongst participants do not improve.

#### 5.4.6.3 FORMAL CONFLICT RESOLUTION COSTS

Participants were asked to report on the total time they have spent on formal conflict resolution in 2012 alone. Participants were asked to report any settlement costs awarded to them in a dispute against the organisation.

Table 5.12 summarises the total hours spent by participants on formal conflict resolution during 2012.

Table 5.12. Costs relating to formal conflict resolution at Shaft 8

<b>Formal conflict resolution costs at Shaft 8</b>		
Cost element	Total hours spent on formal conflict resolution	Settlement costs
Costs due to formal conflict	3291	0
Total cost	R174 7391.94	

The participants at Shaft 8 did not report any settlement costs being paid out to them by the organisation in a dispute during 2012. Participants also report an extremely large amount of time being spent on managing conflict through formal conflict resolution mechanisms at Shaft 8. The total cost of time lost due to formal conflict resolution amounts to **R 174 7391.94**.

Figure 5.6 depicts the response of participants to the amount of time that they spend on formal conflict resolution at Shaft 8.



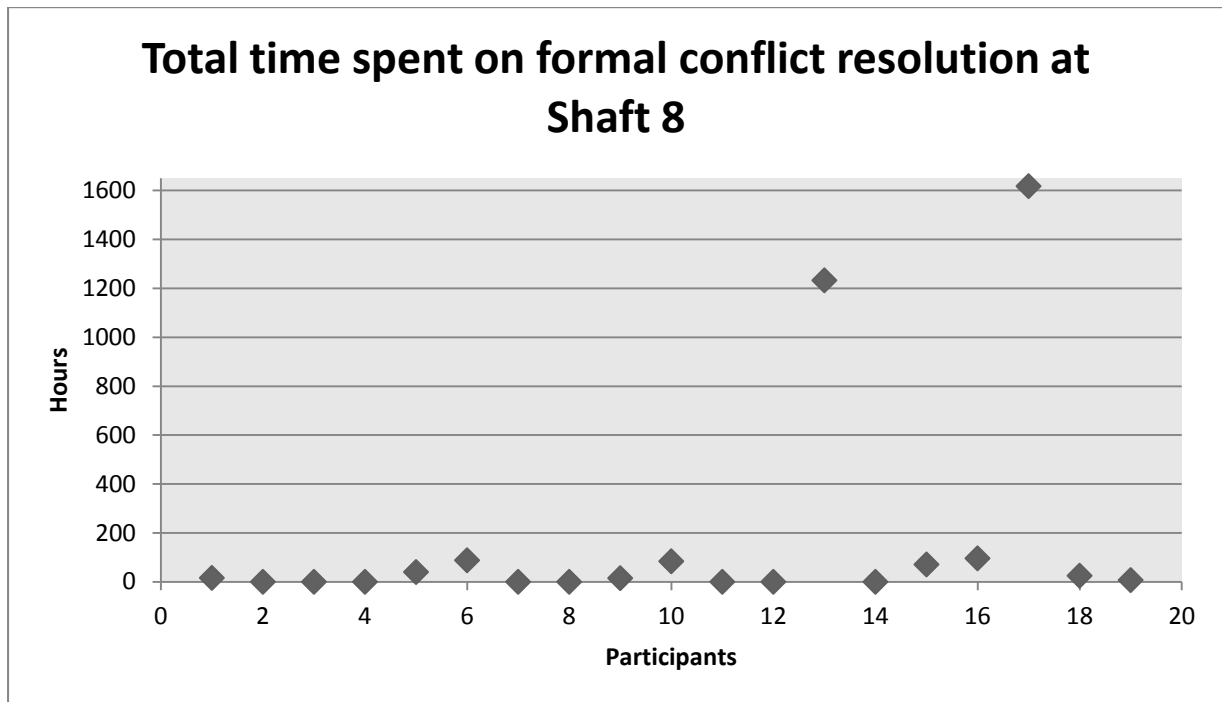


Figure 5.6. Individual responses to time spent on formal conflict resolution at Shaft 8

The outlying values in Figure 5.6 are reports of participants spending more than 1000 hours on formal conflict resolution in 2012 at Shaft 8. It is expected that some employees will spend more time on counselling, grievances and disciplinary action but the immense difference is surprising. Most employees spent less than 100 hours on formal conflict action at Shaft 8 in 2012.

#### 5.4.6.4 THE ESTIMATED TOTAL COST OF CONFLICT AT SHAFT 8

To estimate the total cost of conflict at Shaft 8 the costs relating to working time was added to the formal conflict resolution costs calculated for the shaft. The cost of possible future separations were excluded in the computation as this is simply a precautionary calculation and cannot be regarded as expense until the employee formally terminates employment.

Table 5.13 lists the individual cost estimations added to estimate the total cost of conflict at Shaft 8.

Table 5.13. The total cost of conflict at Shaft 8

<b>The total cost of conflict at Shaft 8</b>				
Cost element	Absenteeism	Presenteeism	Sabotage	Formal conflict costs
Total cost estimation	R280 043.42	R 831 295.30	R782 433.72	R174 7391.94
Total cost of conflict	R 364 1164.40			

The total cost of conflict at Shaft 8 can be estimated at **R 364 1164.40** for 2012.

## 5.5 COMPARISON OF THE TOTAL COST OF CONFLICT FOR THE TWO CONFLICT PROFILES

Conflict affects the two conflict profiles differently in terms of Absenteeism, Presenteeism, Sabotage and Formal conflict. The cost estimations for the two conflict profiles can be summarised in Table 5.14.

Table 5.14. The comparison of the total cost of conflict at Shaft 8 and Shaft 10

<b>The comparison of the total cost of conflict at Shaft 8 and Shaft 10</b>				
Cost element	Absenteeism	Presenteeism	Sabotage	Formal conflict costs
Total cost estimation for Shaft 10	R395 859.31	R 767 412.96	R223 183.02	R789 131.08
Total cost estimation for Shaft 8	R280 043.42	R 831 295.30	R782 433.72	R174 7391.94
Total cost of conflict for Shaft 10	R 217 5586.37			
Total cost of conflict for shaft 8	R 364 1164.40			

In total, Shaft 8 incurred a heftier cost due to conflict than Shaft 10 but comparing the turnover intention of employees in the two conflict profiles a different picture emerges. The costs due to anticipated separation and replacement for Shaft 8 and Shaft 10 are summarised in Table 5.15.

Table 5.15. Comparison of the costs relating to future employee separations at Shaft 8 and Shaft 10

<b>Comparison of the potential future employee separations due to conflict at Shaft 8 and Shaft 10</b>					
Cost element	Replacement costs	Separation costs	Induction costs	Training costs	Performance difference
Costs associated with employee intent to separate with the organisation due to conflict at Shaft 10	R881 135.03	R4441.20	R254 203.73	R816 0806.27	R625 8833.96
Costs associated with employee intent to separate with the organisation due to conflict at Shaft 8	R 406 765.60	R 1828.72	R 104 672.12	R234 9421.32	R150 9308.05
Total cost at Shaft 10	R904 6382.50				
Total cost at Shaft 8	R 275 8015.66				

The turnover costs associated with conflict at Shaft 8 and Shaft 10 show that Shaft 10 is running a pertinent risk of incurring immense future separation and replacement costs due to conflict in the environment.

## 5.6 SUMMARY

In summary, the costs associated with conflict at shaft 10 are slightly lower than the costs at shaft 8. Shaft 8 has a significantly higher cost associated with sabotage than Shaft 10 and Shaft 10 has a significantly higher cost associated with formal conflict resolution. Both Shafts experience high conflict related costs.

A concerning outcome is that participants at Shaft 8 report very high levels of lost time due to ruminating on conflict situations.

Due to the conflict in the environment, Shaft 10 reports costly levels of turnover intention where Shaft 8 reports lower costs associated with anticipated turnover.

In the next chapter (Chapter 6), the results of the costing exercise are discussed as it relates to the conflict profile description for Shaft 8 and Shaft 10 respectively.

## CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH RESULTS

### 6.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter the research results were presented in the form of a case study description after which a summary of the conflict cost calculations were presented.

In this chapter the conflict calculations are discussed as it relates to the case study descriptions. Possible reasons for the trends found in the computations for Shaft 8 and Shaft 10 are discussed separately.

### 6.2 SHAFT 10

The conflict costing results found at Shaft 10 reinforce the trends described in the case study.

The participants at Shaft 10 mentioned that unresolved tension has negative impacts on their wellbeing. Several theorists have linked the experience of overt and covert conflict to ill employee health (Chang et al., 2009; Samaha et al., 2011; Barkl & Hartwick, 2001; Frone, 2000; Bobinski, 2006). The Shaft 10 employees report stomach ulcers and increased levels of stress. They treat these native symptoms with relaxation pills, binge drinking and smoking. It is therefore not surprising that the days they report to have lost due to conflict related absenteeism amass to almost 300 days for 2012 alone. The negative health impact of conflict and resulting poor coping mechanisms of employees lead to increased levels of absenteeism; a secondary effect of conflict as reported by Cram and McWilliams (2012).

The increased absenteeism places stress on colleagues because they have to compensate for the responsibilities of absent employees. Supervisors spend increased amounts of time on administration processing the sick leave. The loss in management time is a secondary effect of conflict noted by Jordaan (2011) and Bobinski (2006) to be a relevant expenditure in organisations. An increase in absenteeism prompts an increase in sick leave discussions as the company attempts to get to the source of the perceived "sick leave abuse".

When analysing the distribution of individual responses to sick leave administration some participants report very high levels of time loss while others report zero hours lost. This might be due to some of the participants simply not having time to tend to administration of

sick leave or they might be disengaging from having sick leave discussions. From the case study description it will not be farfetched to presume that the supervisors simply see sick leave abusers as lazy. If this is the case they will have little interest to enquire after the reasons for their subordinates being absent.

The distribution of individual responses on “time spent compensating for absent employees’ responsibilities” show a similar pattern: select employees report high levels of time spent while others report low levels. There is the possibility that the Shaft has standby staff to compensate for most of the work when an employee is absent but the case study describes employees at the Shaft “collecting pay checks” and refusing to “go the extra mile”. It is expected that the employees at Shaft 10 are sabotaging colleagues by letting work pile up when he/she is absent.

Participants mention elements of a hostile working culture at Shaft 10 that is causing employees to disengage from work. It was mentioned that an article by Behafar et al. (2008) described this third order effect as a type of negative conflict spiral encouraging self-serving behaviour. Chang et al. (2009) makes reference to disengagement as a result of observed hostility. Indeed, some of the participants describe decreases in commitment due to feeling that the company simply does not care about their well-being.

A form of decreased commitment and a second order effect of conflict is described by Barkl and Hartwick (2011) as “foot dragging”. Taking into account the expressed disengagement by participants during interviews, the 230 hours of foot dragging reported by participants is likely to be an underestimate. It is expected that this controversial question might have caused employees to respond more favourably to their own productivity than the truth would reflect.

Participants report very high amounts of time being spent on “cooling down” or “managing the emotional strain” they feel because of the conflict experienced at Shaft 10. This form of productivity loss is a secondary effect of conflict identified by multiple theorists (Rowe, 1997; Jehn, 1995; Bobinski, 2006). This is not a surprising result as the analysis of the interview raw data reflected a propensity for highly emotive and public displays of conflict. Participants do not show that they manage their emotions constructively. The lack of emotional control and emotional management is reflected in the 337.5 hours spent on trying to suppress anger and frustration.

Interview participants stated that they lose a lot of meeting time on unproductive conflict. Unhealthy competition between colleagues and degenerated interpersonal relationships retard the ability of employees to work as a team. They lose significant time in meetings where a mutual understanding of joint solutions to problems needs to be achieved. A staggering 669 hours of meetings were reported to have been lost between the 22 participants in 2012 alone. This is again a reported loss in management time as a secondary effect of conflict.

A worrying result was the limited time that employees report thinking or ruminating on conflict during 2012. Participants report 391 working hours being lost due to thinking on how to deal with the conflict at hand. This is far less than the time employees spend on confronting the parties that they perceive to be causing their goal frustration (comparing the total of 391 hours to the 669 hours of meeting time lost). This might be another example of the low concern for others shown by the participants. The high levels of confronting and avoiding conflict handling styles reported at the shaft is another example.

Participants report a loss of 402 hours of working time due to intentional miscommunication. Behafar et al. (2008) and Bobinski (2006) identify intentional miscommunication as a common first order effect of conflict in organisations. The Centre for Conflict Resolution International (2012) sees this form of behaviour as Sabotage because employees try to passive aggressively “get back” at the perceived aggressor.

This form of passive aggressive conflict behaviour is supported by accounts of victimisation reported by participants. Employees may feel that intentional miscommunication is a safer way of addressing the perceived injustice than confronting someone that can potentially make their working lives difficult. In this way they “get back” at the person they are in conflict with. Vandalism and victimisation were not explicitly measured as a form of sabotage behaviour. Case study accounts would suggest that if these behaviours would have been included a higher cost would have been a result.

The total cost of presenteeism at Shaft 10 is R 767 412.96. This amount supports the notion that presenteeism cost the organisation more than its famous counterpart, absenteeism (Cascio and Boudreau, 2011).

On par with the severe turnover intention reported by interviewed employees the possible future turnover cost of employees wishing to separate employment due to the conflict at the shaft amass to almost 1million rand. Increased turnover intention is a first order effect of conflict reported on by Jordaan (2011). This is a warning sign indicating that conflict at the shaft will have significant future impacts on the bottom line.

The most often mentioned first order effect of conflict is the use of formal conflict resolution mechanisms to address conflict. Multiple theorists mention that employees tend to overload the formal process when confronted with a hostile conflict environment (Barkl & Hartwick, 2001; Ford & Barnes-Slater, 2012; Bobinski, 2006). The total time spent on formal conflict resolution at shaft 10 is 1447 hours of working time for the 22 participants who completed the survey questionnaire. Employees report conflict being escalated due to avoidance behaviour and supervisors threatening subordinates with possible disciplinary action. These actions contribute to the total hours spent on resolving possible low level conflicts using the formal grievance and disciplinary process.

The total cost of conflict at Shaft 10 is estimated at **R 217 5586.37** for 2012. All costs can be linked to the case study description making the estimate a probable total. Even though it should be acknowledged that conflict can never be completely removed from social systems with diversity (like the working environment at Shaft 10) the costs can surely be reduced.

The conflict estimate can be meaningfully compared to the total yearly compensation package for the participants. The total yearly compensation for the 22 participants amounts to approximately R2 419 8396.16 for 2012. The conflict cost estimation for Shaft 10 is 9 % of the total compensation cost of the 22 participants. The costs of conflict seem slight when compared to the total compensation, but it should be mentioned that this cost has been calculated just taking formal conflict resolution, presenteeism, absenteeism and intentional miscommunication into account. The many other outcomes of conflict will more than likely inflate this “preventable” cost. The total anticipated turnover costs from 37.4 % of the total compensation costs of the participants. More worrying at Shaft 10 is the willingness of participants to separate with the organisation due to the mismanaged conflict at the Shaft.



## 6.3 SHAFT 8

The following discussion links the conflict computations from Shaft 8 to the case study description for Shaft 8 discussed in Chapter 5, Section 5.4.

From the analysis of interview responses and the resulting case study description it seems likely that the sample group at Shaft 8 does not experience significant emotional stress and strain leading to absenteeism. The participants do report 166 days of absence taken by subordinates as a means to avoid conflict. This may be an indication that most of the conflict experienced at the shaft originates at lower employee levels. Participants share this view; some of them mentioned in the interviews that destructive conflict behaviour is more prevalent in lower organisational levels. Absenteeism as a second order effect of conflict is therefore less prevalent in this conflict profile than at Shaft 10.

Participants report 71.25 days being lost due to absenteeism related administration. This is an expected repercussion due to subordinates being absent in an attempt to avoid conflict. Supervisors are required by the company to have absenteeism discussions with subordinates to uncover the reasons for possible "sick leave abuse". Participants report similar levels of time spent on these discussions.

Participants report a high amount of time being lost due to the need to compensate for absent employees' responsibilities. The 17 participants indicate that they have lost a total of 107.63 days in 2012 assisting with the work load of absent employees in order to ensure that production is not adversely affected. This form of "loss in management time" is a second order effect of conflict that is highly pronounced at Shaft 8. The distribution of individual answers indicate that most employees have experienced similar amounts of lost time and that most of them experienced between 25 and 100 hours of lost working time. Interviewed participants indicated that they clearly understood how individual contributions contribute to the shared production targets for the shaft. It is likely that participants shared the work load because they are committed to achieving those goals. An increase in withdrawal behaviour and a reduction in commitment reported by Chang et al. (2009) and Samaha et al. (2011) as a consequence of conflict might not be a reason for the Shaft 8 high score in "lost management time".

Interviewed participants report that they have observed decreases in co-operation as a result of conflict but the results of the survey questionnaire indicated that none of the participants have reduced their assistance to co-workers as a result of conflict in 2012. This outcome might be due to a discrepancy between the interview sample and the sample who submitted the survey questionnaire. The result might also be due to resistance from the participants to honestly answer this sensitive question. The third possibility is that the sample population simply do not reduce their assistance to colleagues as a way of dealing with conflict.

Analysis of the interview responses indicated that the manner in which participants prefer to manage conflict is not overly aggressive and publically humiliating. Employees prefer to use avoidance styles or in ideal circumstances initiate collaboration strategies at solving the conflict. Participants also display evidence of accurate emotional recognition and emotional management when engaging in conflict, which equips them to more effectively solve the dispute. It is not surprising that the 17 participants only report having lost a total of 57.5 working hours to managing the emotional repercussions of conflict situations. The possible productivity loss reported by Rowe (1997) and Jehn (1995) that form part of second order effects of conflict was not particularly prevalent at Shaft 8.

Similar to Shaft 10, participants at Shaft 8 also report having lost many meeting hours on unproductive conflict. Of the 17 respondents, a reported 531 hours of unproductive meeting time was spent on destructive conflict. The loss in management effectiveness due to conflict can often be severe (Samaha et al., 2011; Barkl & Hartwick, 2001; Bobinski, 2006). The interviewed participants do mention that a recent intervention aimed at decreasing the conflict in meetings has had a very positive impact on reducing the amount of time lost in this way. The reported interventions might have re-established management credibility, lost due to negative conflict interactions.

The participants at Shaft 8 report a surprising amount of working time lost due to ruminating on the conflict situation. A total of 1202.25 of working hours lost for 17 participants in 2012 alone is a very high total. The distribution of responses indicate that the participants experience equally high amounts of time spent on this element of presentism. Analysis of the interview responses indicate that the sample group prefer a calculated approach to conflict which might explain the high amount of time spent thinking on conflict.

Employees therefore spend significant amounts of cognitive resources planning their approach to solving the conflict situation (Chang et al., 2009; Jehn, 1995). Even though this action is not bad in itself it does affect the bottom line adversely. Being a second order effect of conflict, productivity loss in this way should be addressed. If participants could be trained to analyse the emotional climate and select the most suitable conflict management strategy, they might take less time in deciding on the appropriate course of action.

A concerning amount of time was reported to be lost due to intentional miscommunication experienced by participants; a total of 1342 working hours. This result challenges the positive picture painted by interviewed participants on the manner in which conflict is addressed. It would seem as though, even if conflict is not overtly displayed at the shaft, employees use covert and passive aggressive ways of ensuring “justice”. A significant portion of the total cost of conflict at the shaft can be attributed to instances of intentional miscommunication. This form of sabotage has been categorised as a first order effect of conflict and noted by Behafar et al. (2008) and Bobinski (2006) as a noteworthy expense.

A total of 7 of the 19 employees at Shaft 8 indicated that they intend to leave the organisation due to the conflict that they experience at the shaft. Even though this is a far lower total than experienced at Shaft 10 it is still a rather high percentage at 37%. This turnover intention was not observed as a significant trend in the interviews.

A first order effect of conflict also prevalent at Shaft 10 is the amount of time spent on formal conflict resolution. An alarming amount of time is reported to be spent at Shaft 8 on formal conflict resolution; 3291 hours of employee time is used for counselling, grievance procedures and disciplinary hearings. The distribution of individual responses reveals two extremely high outlying values. This is seen as the cause of the worrying total. These values might be due to inaccurate perceptions of participants inflating the total of their time spent on formal conflict. It can also be due to the inclusion of HR in the sample; as HR is required to participate in all formal conflict proceedings it is expected that participants in HR will report a high amount of time spent on formal conflict. Even if the outlying values are due to the inclusion of HR in the sample, the total is still concerning. Interviewed participants do mention a tendency for employees to “escalate” issues rather than solving conflict at the lowest level. This avoidance behaviour might be the cause for the high number of formal conflict instances at Shaft 8.

The total cost of conflict at Shaft 8 can be estimated at **R 364 1164.40** for 2012. This high total can be attributed to a high amount of time spent on formal conflict, ruminating on conflict and intentional miscommunication. Attention should be given to these problem areas in order to improve the amount of constructive conflict in the Shaft 8 profile as well as decrease instances of destructive conflict.

The total cost of conflict at Shaft 8 can be compared to the total compensation package for the 19 participants at Shaft 8. Total compensation for the 19 participants amount to R 2 151 7628.60. The total cost of conflict is 17 % of total compensation for the participants. Even though costs associated with absenteeism, presenteeism, formal conflict resolution and intentional miscommunication do not include all of the possible costs of conflict this is a significant amount when compared to total compensation. The total cost of anticipated separations due to conflict are far less at 8.1 % of total compensation cost. These costs can be reduced if appropriate interventions are implemented (Centre for Conflict Resolution International, 2012).

## 6.4 SUMMARY

The present chapter discussed the cost elements uncovered in the data analysis and linked the trends to documented trends found in the conflict profiles of the two different shafts. The costing exercise highlights areas of concern by assessing the amount of time loss reported by participants. The reported time loss was used in computations to link a monetary value to the conflict behaviour.

This monetary value can be used to motivate the need for preventative conflict management systems to be in place to support the formal conflict management process. Ensuring that employees are equipped with the knowledge and the skills to effectively manage conflict before it escalates to formal conflict, will in all probability reduce the negative impact of conflict on the bottom line of the organisation. Clearly the formal process does not address the cause but only the symptoms of less overt workplace conflict.

The following chapter (Chapter 7), documents the limitations of the present study, recommendations for future research and a final conclusion.

## CHAPTER 7: RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

### 7.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter the research results of the survey questionnaire and SAP master data was discussed as it relates to the case study description. Possibilities for observed trends were discussed and elements of conflict which can be addressed to reduce the cost of conflict experienced by Shaft 8 and Shaft 10 employees were explored.

The final section of this study aims to provide guidance to future researchers wishing to conduct a study on the costing of conflict in organisations.

### 7.2 LIMITATIONS

It is acknowledged that this study does not have the scope to quantify every outcome related to conflict nor can it measure the financial implications of conflict without error. The study aims to be a first step in the direction of measuring the cost of conflict accurately and comprehensively.

It is acknowledged that the nature of the study does not lend itself to be easily generalized to all conflict situations and in all industries. Due to the fact that a case study methodology is used, unique contextual elements may influence the outcomes to such an extent that the results are equally unique. However, it should also be stated that this study does not aim to generalize; it aims to provide a framework with which practitioners can quantify conflict within their own set of parameters. It also aims to give an indication of the possible costs of conflict to motivate preventative attempts at conflict management before conflict escalates to more costly levels.

It is a possibility that the heavy reliance on the memory of individuals regarding their behaviour in the last year could have distorted the outcomes. Also the individual perceptions of conflict, which might or might not perfectly relate to actual events, might have exaggerated or depreciated the actual reported totals.

Additional to the calculated cost elements, there are many more conflict effects that can increase the cost of conflict; this study was focused on the elements of conflict that can be calculated with a relative amount of confidence. Many second order and third order effects

of conflict can contribute to the overall cost of conflict in this organisation but are difficult if not impossible to quantify.

### 7.3 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

A difficulty that is especially relevant to this study is to be able to estimate the difference between costs incurred due to inevitable disagreements versus preventable conflict.

To take this limitation into account it would be beneficial to compare the average time spent on conflict resolution within a highly emotive and potentially severely destructive environment with the averages found in a relatively “healthy system”. It is suggested that future conflict research compare two divergent conflict profiles to gain clarity on this limitation.

It is also suggested that future research elaborates on the suggested computations for calculating conflict by adding more dimensions. Further refinement of the formulas will contribute to the epistemic ideal of research and add to the practical value of conflict cost estimations and the eventual use of these metrics in tracking the effectiveness of HR interventions.

The survey questionnaire can be further refined to increase the validity of responses.

The survey questionnaire can be used to develop metrics similar to that of the SHRM costing software and used in conjunction with HR master data programmes like SAP to adjust to the specific needs of individual organisations. In this way accurate and timely data on the remuneration of employees can be used as input for the computations.

It will be beneficial for future research to launch a longitudinal study to investigate the costs of conflict. In this way data input can be monitored daily and more accurate results can be produced in comparison to the current study that relies heavily on the memory of participants.

It is proposed that by acknowledging the limitations of the current study and providing a scope for future research, practitioners and future researchers will be in a better position to make inroads in the field of conflict research. The practical value of the study may also aid HR practitioners as a tool for estimating conflict within their own environments.

Practitioners will be able to identify areas of concern and motivate for preventative conflict management systems to reduce future cost. The effectiveness of these interventions can be monitored by using the conflict computations discussed in this study.

## 7.4 CONCLUSION

In this study conflict was discussed as a costly phenomenon in business. A thorough literature overview discussed the characteristics of conflict after which possible computations for the calculation of the financial effects of conflict was developed. Two conflict profiles in the mining industry in South Africa were investigated and costing metrics used to calculate the costs associated with conflict in the separate profiles. A discussion of the research results showed that the calculated conflict costs were linked to the trends identified in the two conflict profiles.

The unique relevance of this study is to give Human Resources more influence when motivating for pre-emptive conflict management initiatives. Additionally the study has attempted to give the practitioner a starting point with which to purposefully analyse situations where unique circumstances have escalated conflict to become more damaging.

This study has portrayed conflict as something that is manageable; it is not just an inevitable cost of conducting business. This challenges the prominent view that conflict is a “fixed cost” that cannot be reduced. By using the computations discussed in this study the practitioner will be able to track the effectiveness of conflict management initiatives and prove a ROI in monetary terms.

The use of metrics and formulas that translate the soft issue of conflict into hard financial facts enable HR practitioners to talk to business partners in a universal language: financial cost.

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# APPENDIX A: INFORMED CONSENT FORM



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STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY

## CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

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### *Costing Conflict: a case study approach to the mining industry in South Africa.*

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by Ms. Dore Burger, Mcom (Psyc), (under the supervision of Mr. G.G Cillié), from the department of Industrial Psychology at Stellenbosch University. The results of this study will contribute to the above mentioned thesis. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because of the possibility that you are experiencing conflict in your occupation as well as the availability of your group as indicated by the organisation.

#### 1. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This research proposal will focus on conflict within organisations in the attempt to gain clarity on this very common phenomenon and to link conflict to financial cost. A multiple case study approach is used in order to understand the intricacies that make conflict a variable, situation-dependant occurrence and to calculate a preliminary estimate of the financial costs incurred by the organisation due to hostilities. By gaining a financial grip on conflict the researcher attempts to give the reader the tools with which to estimate parameters and calculate financial costs within their own conflict situations. The reader will also be able to motivate the need for management to invest in pre-emptive conflict resolution structures.

#### 2. PROCEDURES

If you volunteer to participate in this study, we would ask you to do the following things:

**Complete a questionnaire:** (15min)

All participants will be asked to complete a questionnaire.

The questionnaire will focus on morale and personal circumstance.

You can complete the questionnaire manually and drop the completed form in the survey box.

Alternatively the questionnaire can be sent to you via email to be completed at your earliest convenience. You will be required to send the completed survey to the researcher using anonymous scan function on the copiers. If you struggle with this function you are welcome to ask the administrative assistants for help. Please send the completed form to: [15130592@sun.ac.za](mailto:15130592@sun.ac.za) or [doreburger@gmail.com](mailto:doreburger@gmail.com).

**Attend an interview:** (30min)

If you are selected with computerised random selection you will be asked to participate in a structured interview. Only 8 employees from each group will be selected. The researcher will ask some questions to understand the circumstances that might lead to conflict. The interview will take the form of a conversation.

You will be contacted for an interview and the session will be scheduled at your earliest convenience. If so wished the interview can be conducted telephonically.

### **3. POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS**

This study is purely for academic purposes and will not have any bearing on your current job or any future opportunities. No names will be mentioned and confidentiality will at all times be maintained. Your individual answers will not be made available for scrutiny by company management.

You will not be forced to answer any questions that you feel uncomfortable with. Please answer as many questions, as thoroughly as you feel comfortable with.

The questions asked in the interview as well as the questionnaire will require you to think back on situations in which you experience conflict and might therefore cause you some emotional discomfort. If you experience severe psychological discomfort a counselling session will be provided at your request.

You can contact Careways to provide counselling at your request:

Careways helpline: **0800004770**

### **4. POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY**

Conflict in organisations is an inevitable consequence of diversity in culture, opinion, mannerisms and interaction patterns. Yet little to no research has translated conflict into financial terms. The result has been clear: even though organisations agree that conflict can be destructive, the active management of conflict has been severely underfunded and preventative methods take a backseat in comparison to "fire fighting". By translating the outcomes of conflict into financial terms, a greater understanding of the true cost of conflict can be achieved.

The goal of this study is to investigate several conflict scenarios and estimate the loss incurred due to conflict. The study will significantly contribute to the understanding of conflict outcomes.

### **5. PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION**

This study is voluntary and not remunerated. By participating you are helping conflict research make an impact in modern day organisations.

### **6. CONFIDENTIALITY**

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Confidentiality will be maintained by means of closed session interviews where-after the data and any recordings will be locked away. Only the researcher will have access. No names will be attached to testimonials or questionnaires.

Alternatively questionnaires can be completed via email and can be completed anonymously. If you wish to complete the survey via email, you will need to scan the completed form and send the file to the researcher:

[15130592@sun.ac.za](mailto:15130592@sun.ac.za) / [doreburger@gmail.com](mailto:doreburger@gmail.com)

The information in this study will not be disclosed to a third party without your permission. Your individual answers will not be made available for scrutiny by company management.

If the results of this study are to be published no names will be mentioned and the organisation will be kept anonymous.

**7. PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL**

You can choose whether to be in this study or not. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You may also refuse to answer any questions you don't want to answer and still remain in the study. The investigator may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so.

**8. IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS**

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact:

D.G. Burger      0849292190  
                         15130592@sun.ac.za  
G.G. Cillié        0824145712  
                         ggc@sun.ac.za

**9. RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS**

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, contact Ms Maléne Fouché [mfouche@sun.ac.za; 021 808 4622] at Stellenbosch University: Division for Research Development.

**SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH SUBJECT OR LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE**

The information above was described to \_\_\_\_\_ by D.G. Burger in English and I am in command of this language or it was satisfactorily translated to me. I was given the opportunity to ask questions and these questions were answered to my satisfaction.

I hereby consent voluntarily to participate in this study.

I have been given a copy of this form.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Subject/Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR**

I declare that I explained the information given in this document to \_\_\_\_\_.  
[He/she] was encouraged and given ample time to ask me any questions. This conversation was conducted in English.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Investigator

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date



4. In your opinion what is the 3 most common reasons for conflict at the shaft in which you work?

4.1 Could you give me an **example** of a **destructive/bad conflict situation** that you know of? In other words a situation where conflict caused negative results in some elements of productivity or people relationships?

4.2 Follow up: do you think the two groups/people wanted to achieve the same thing?

5.1 Could you give me an **example** of a **constructive/good conflict** situation that you know of? In other words a situation where conflict caused positive results in both productivity and people relationships?

5.2 Follow up: do you think the two groups/people wanted to achieve the same thing?

6. How important do you think are the things that people fight about?

7. What situation or action would **reduce** the negative emotions in a conflict situation at work?

8. What situation or action would **increase** the negative emotions in a conflict situation at work?

9.1 What do you feel when you are in a conflict situation?

Emotions	Body	Behavior
How do you handle your emotions?	How do you handle the effects on your body?	Do you think that your behavior is helpful?

9.2 Follow up: after the conflict has been resolved do you still feel any of these effects (as if they linger)?

10. How do most people **handle conflict** at the shaft?

A) Between a co-worker	B) Between a supervisor	C) Between a subordinate



11. If **you** are in a destructive/bad conflict situation, what do you think the outcomes are for:

A) You	B) The other party	C) The company/ your employer

12.1 When employees at the shaft are in conflict, do their actions cause your team to lose productivity?

12.2 Follow up: while the conflict remains unresolved, how often do these negative actions occur?

12.3 Follow up: What do team members and supervisors do to reduce the behavior?

12.4 Follow up: In your opinion are these interventions successful? Why?

13. If you disagree with someone, how are you expected to express your frustration while at work?

14. Have you ever felt like something bad happened to someone because they were unfair (they deserved it)?

15. What would you change in your working environment so that conflict is better managed?

## APPENDIX C: SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

**Answer the following questions by ticking the appropriate box. Choose the most relevant answer and do not tick more than one box. When a question requires to type in an answer, do so in the open box.**

### Section A – Biographical data

Number	Question	x	Options
1.	Where do you work?		Shaft 8
			Shaft 10
2.	Ethnic origin:		White
			Colored
			Black
			Indian
3.	Gender:		Male
			Female
4.	In what employee group does your current position fall:		Managerial & specialist
			Bargaining unit
5.	What is your current <b>pay</b> level (your salary level)?		D4
			D3
			D2
			D1
			C5
			C4
			C3
6.	Do you receive a medical aid subsidy and to what value? (supply a Rand value)	R	
7.	Do you receive a housing allowance or a living out allowance? Please specify amount per month:		Housing
			Living out allowance

<b>8.</b>	Do you receive a traveling allowance?		No
			Yes
	To what value?	R	
<b>9.</b>	What is your average working hours <b>per week</b> ? Excluding overtime.	Hours:	
<b>10.</b>	What is your average overtime per week?	Hours during the week (Mon – Fri)	
		Hours during Zama –Zama (Fri –Sat)	

## Section B – Costs Relating to Working Time

<b>11.</b>	If you experience stress or emotional strain due to conflict, have you ever been absent because of it?  Estimate the number of days you have been absent due to stress and strain associated with conflict in 2012.	Days:	
<b>12.</b>	Have you ever deliberately worked less diligently to “compensate” for unfair treatment?  How many hours of productivity do you estimate have you spent on “foot dragging”/ “going slow” during 2012?	Hours:	
<b>13.</b>	How many working hours have you spend on “cooling down” or managing your stress levels due to conflict in 2012 alone?  (e.g. smoking, taking breaks, gossiping, “venting”)	Hours:	

<b>14.</b>	Estimate the meeting time that you have lost due to unproductive conflict in 2012? (Unproductive conflict: where a solution was not reached or the conflict damaged relationships)	Hours:	
<b>15.</b>	During working time, much time have you spent thinking about on conflict situations in 2012?	Hours:	
<b>16.</b>	Estimate how many working hours have you lost due to experiencing intentional miscommunication/ refusals to collaborate in 2012?	Hours:	
<b>17.</b>	Estimate how many days your employees are absent in an attempt to avoid conflict/ recover from conflict/ avoid other employees? (e.g. absent to avoid Disciplinary action/ counselling/ reprimand/ uncomfortable conversations with other employees)	Days:	
<b>18.</b>	On average how many working hours have you spent to compensate for an absent employee's responsibilities in 2012? (responsibilities: doing some of their work so that the shift can continue)	Hours:	
<b>19.</b>	How many hours have you lost in dealing with administration when an employee is absent in 2012 alone?	Hours:	

## Section E – Formal Conflict

<b>20.</b>	Estimate how many working hours (this year) have you been <b>involved in the formal proceedings of grievances?</b>  (include lodging a grievance, completing forms, disciplinarians, CCMA cases, counseling, informal mediation, debriefing)	Days:	
		Hours:	
<b>21.</b>	Estimate how many working hours (this year) have you <b>needed to prepare</b> for a formal grievance.	Days:	
		Hours:	
<b>22.</b>	Where you were the grievant, have you ever received a payment from the company as a settlement? Please specify the total amount awarded in settlement costs.	R	

## Section D – Turnover Intention

<b>23.</b>	How often do you have thoughts of leaving the company due to the conflict in your environment?  (if, assume you are not bound by contract for a work back period)		Often (weekly, even daily)
			Sometimes (once a month maybe every two months)
			Never
<b>24.</b>	If another job opportunity (for the same pay and benefits) opens up in another mine/different company/ different shaft will you take it?		No
			Yes

Section E – Separation Costs

25.	Did you receive a moving allowance when you joined the company? Please indicate the total amount:	R		
26.	Were you financially assisted by the company to further your studies? How many years were you financially assisted for?	Yes		Years
			Blasting certificate	
			Gas testing certificate	
			Flame proofing	
			Degree	
			Diploma	
			N- course	
			Diploma	
27.	While earning a salary at the mine, how many hours have you spent on formal training external to the organisation (diplomas, degrees and certificates)?	Days:		
		Hours:		
28.	How much time have you spent on e-learning (SABA training)?	Days:		
		Hours:		
29.	How much time have you spent on induction training?	Days:		
		Hours:		
30.	How much time would it take you to train someone to successfully take your place (Act in your position if you should leave the company)	Days:		
		Hours:		



## APPENDIX D: SHAFT 10 INTERVIEW RAW DATA

1. Describe to me the emotional environment in which you are you currently working? (How do people talk to each other? What is the atmosphere like?)

*As an artisan it was bad. They did not treat me well. They send you around and around. It was not nice to be a fitter.*

*People always talk nonsense behind your back. They sit in meetings and you are not there to defend yourself. You get shot down in front of managers. Then it causes big friction because then everyone just wants to start hitting each other. If this goes on I will just lose it with someone, hit him and leave the company.*

*There is a lot of pressure and they take it out on each other but if you want to talk it out then the other guy just has this blank face. As if he is not listening.*

*Sometimes team members are fist and fingers in each other's face. Then you have to get them all in your office and have them sort it out in front of you. I will make them shake hands. They probably won't solve the conflict but at least they leave each other alone. They fight in very public ways. It is the same things with the supervisors.*

*I respect my manager because I have to, he is the manager. Respect should come from both sides. I am not happy with how we are managed. There is a lot of favouritism. It makes me not want to do my job.*

*People tend to be defensive. They don't focus on the subject matter, they personalise things. They attach the person and then it shifts the mood.*

*The environment is defensive in general. People tend to attack from the back. If production is up then people are more positive. Mood is linked to the tones that we take out.*

*The mood is tense. People tend to be very curt with each other and emotions tend to get the better of you. Politely stated we get very emotional. Basically: "to hell with it all".*

*Mining and engineering has a lot of conflict. We get mad and frustrated but it is not always so tense.*

*The company says that it puts people first but the atmosphere here works on me at home to. It mixes with my family life.*

*On top it is alright but underground it is another story. People are harsh when no one can hear but when there is a crowd they act differently.*

*There is no respect for one another. People speak their minds without taking the other person into account. They have a disregard for the other person's feelings. They force their point of view on others and they don't listen. There is no communication.*

*Long ago the environment was friendly. We would mix, make jokes and work hard. Not anymore.*

*Instructions are not taken. They do what they want to do, and then they deny that they ever got the instructions. It is an attitude problem. They act clever but they don't know anything. It is a power struggle. I love my job but I just want to leave. I will die of a heart attack. All I attempt to do is being frustrated. I can achieve nothing. They interfere with everything. They micromanage me and then I retract from doing my job but I still have to carry the responsibility?!*

## 2. Describe to me how you define conflict? What is conflict?

*It is misunderstandings between people. It can be job related or it can be personal. I am not referring to whether people are wrong or right.*

*The two parties don't have the same point of view and then they clash*

*Screaming and shouting and sometimes threatening. At least they don't swear anymore.*

*Conflict is when people don't listen to each other. Narrow minded people tend to irritate me. They have tunnel vision and it is like talking to a brick wall. When something goes wrong conflict sticks in my head in a prominent way.*

*90% of the time people get along with each other but the underlying conflict never gets resolved. It has been going on forever. Especially mining and engineering and that fight flares up when something goes wrong.*

*Conflict is contracting ideas and ideals. It can be verbally or emotionally expressed. Some people bottle the emotion. They are silent and it causes them a lot of stress but it can sometimes cause good stress and encourage production.*

*Conflict is misunderstandings between two or more people. It can also be internal conflict within yourself especially when you are faced with decisions between values and procedures.*

*Conflict is when you disagree about something. Then someone gets the hell in because the work does not get done. That is when you struggle to achieve your goals.*

*People jump over and fiddle with each other's jobs. Even good friends fight with each other because everyone is up in each other's business.*

*Conflict is when communication is bad or when there is no development. They don't take an interest in me as a person. Maybe it is because I am a lady that they think I am not powerful.*

### 3. Do you think conflict is a good or a bad occurrence in a workplace? Why?

*Conflict is bad because we cannot produce if we do not understand each other.*

*Conflict is a very bad thing. I try to keep my people happy and I try to sort their problems out. You cannot do a job with people who do not like each other. People do not want to come to work because they know that there is going to be conflict. They stress the whole time and then they get depressed.*

*To an extent it can be good – if it is within boundaries. Conflict is like pain: it tells you what is wrong. It gets bad when you cannot control the conflict and it affects production.*

*It depends on how the conflict is taken and how it is addressed. It also depends on the situation. For instance: there is a right way and there is a wrong way in terms of safety. People might have conflicting ideas on how to approach the problem but they need a consensus to work safely. Bad conflict influences the people's attitude and the way that they approach people. You might shoot down people in public.*

*Good conflict can create a forum where problems can be resolved. In good conflict you can think of a solution to a problem because the underlying issues have been unearthed. It then creates drive and passion to get the best solution. It is like a devil's advocate. But conflict can also be bad. Bad conflict festers. I can observe it here. We can take about if for 7 months and it never gets resolved.*

*It depends on how you do the conflict. If there is a dialog then maybe it can be good. It is not a good thing in the end because you start to attack the person and not the problem.*

*They attack the person a lot here. They attack the foreman because the artisans make a mistake and then the foreman attack the artisan.*

*Conflict can be good because you can listen to the other point of view and you might find a better solution, something you did not think of. It can also be bad because then you don't listen. People here force what they want. They can be very forceful.*

*Conflict can be good if it benefits the company. If it is job related issues like a misunderstanding on the job and they have to thoroughly describe the problem and try to solve it then production will increase. If it is not job related it can still be a good thing. Discussing conflict is a good thing because we can forgive each other, iron out grudges. Grudges affect production and are caused by conflict that is not solved. A grudge is a bad thing to the company.*

4. In your opinion what is the 3 most common reasons for conflict at the shaft in which you work?

*I have not observed anything*

*Communication, high levels of autocratic decision making (a forceful top-down approach) and not enough experience with conflict (people make bad conflict management decisions). There might not be enough training given to provide the employees with tools to manage conflict. It just gets out of hand. People walk out of meetings. They talk disrespectfully and loud to each other and the whole team gets negative.*

*Putting their noses in other people's business and interfering. Then it becomes a power struggle.*

*We are not producing and then people get frustrated. They blame each other for the problems but they never get to fix the problems.*

*The people go for interventions but as soon as they get back it disappears. They need communication courses because communication is a problem but as soon as they get back it will disappear again.*

*There is a history of bad conflict between mining and engineering and there are communication problems where people do not listen to each other.*

*There is a culture of people not “giving a damn”. There is no pride, no ownership in the work that they do. There are too many chiefs and too little Indians. They just want a paycheck and they don’t care about the rest. If you don’t care about something and I take you on you will be defensive because you won’t have the best interest of the company to think about. You will just think about yourself. People say that attack is the best defense. They don’t want a solution; all that they see is someone attacking them personally.*

*Differences in opinion regarding plans and solutions cause conflict and that gets worse with production stress.*

*There is a lack of respect, a blame game and people not taking responsibility and accountability and people do not know how to communicate. Communication problems also relate to respect. You can say one thing in many different ways and give the same meaning but the emotional effect is different.*

*The main reasons for conflict are people interfering with each other’s jobs, culture differences and difficulties in communication.*

*Communication is a problem and development because people feel under-appreciated.*

5.1 Could you give me an example of a destructive/bad conflict situation that you know of? In other words a situation where conflict caused negative results in some elements of productivity or people relationships?

*If there is no communication you will be negative. Your manager wants you to do a job without telling you how to do a job. They call you and they tell you that a breakdown is your problem but you don’t have the tools to fix the problem. That is why people resign. Other companies send people for training.*

*Two team members disagreed about water in the motherpanel. The electrician could not figure out that is the problem and then the fitter made a suggestion. The electrician decided to stop helping and the fitter had to fix the problem but it is not in his job description. They ended up throwing equipment at each other. I had them in. they cried like babies but they won’t do that again.*

*When there is no openness in communication. One party giving unilateral instructions but people need to air their views. They are just cut down. It boils up in them and then they explode or they leave the company.*

*People are shot down in public and then they just retract and don't produce. Others will moan but they will do the work if you publically criticise them. The teams do not want to listen to their leaders; they think that the leaders are incompetent. In these situations we often have to move the team composition but the conflict is then never resolved.*

*We had to move a section but it was not planned properly. No one debated on the possible problems. One of the departments did not do their jobs and they also could not care less. I had to do their work in the end. It all boils down to pride in your work. We all get paid the same salary but I do most of the work and have more responsibility. They cannot organise a basic thing. It is frustrating and you can only take so much. 90% of the conflict would disappear if everyone just did their part but now 10% of the people do all the work.*

*One team member did not do his job and when the other team member had to use the equipment he had to clean the machine. At the end of the day he is so angry but everyone just blames the other person, no one takes responsibility. Now there is a bad vibe and they have to work together. They put the conflict away but they take it out later again. Outside of the mine they will not even greet each other.*

*Employees had a problem with the shifts but management forced a decision. There was no further discussion. They did not listen to the employees reasons nor did they give reasons for their decisions. I still don't know why the decision was made. It made everyone very negative. They don't do their work with passion; they just do it to get a pay slip.*

*I cannot think of a bad conflict situation. If there is I have not come across it.*

5.2 Follow up: do you think the two groups/people wanted to achieve the same thing?

*No we do not want to achieve the same thing. Management has certain goals but because they do not communicate the individuals only see a bit of the picture. If they discussed it they would have solved the problems in a mutually beneficial way.*

*The employees are leaving in masses. They take a lot of heat and they stress and then they get to a point where they just don't care anymore. I can't take this crap anymore. I do not like the fighting. This mine solves things with complaints. Everyone feels victimised. All of the conflict gets solved formally, in a grievance. They are too scared to discuss it openly.*

*They all want to move the section. The thing is that the work is separate but we cannot do our work if we don't work together. We all know our work impacts each other but discipline and consequence management does not exist. There is a lack of supervision on the lower employee's as well.*

*Both wanted to produce but they still could not see eye to eye. They wanted to get to the right goal but the route was not aligned. They wanted to take different routes.*

*The problem was not defined properly and was not highlighted and explained. They were unfocussed and they did not go in the same direction to sort it out.*

*They know that the job must be finished. They have a gap to do it properly but they were fighting about how to do it and then they went into extra time. The pressure caused them to fight more. They need to work as a team. They don't talk to each other now but at least they get the job done. I think the thing is that the one guy has a very short temper and the other guy avoids conflict. They are very different people.*

6.1 Could you give me an example of a constructive/good conflict situation that you know of? In other words a situation where conflict caused positive results in both productivity and people relationships?

*No, I do not have any examples of good conflict. I would like to leave my career.*

*If we can get people to sort out their differences privately so that they can reach a mutual understanding we will have good conflict. This doesn't not happen to the new guys, they don't understand each other yet.*

*Yes, there is a situation where 2 people were arguing about an issue. But they lost track of the argument. We sent them to go to an area and get a common diagnosis. They worked out their differences because they were forced to work together and they got a brilliant solution. They just needed to talk to each other and then get a common understanding of the problem instead of attacking each other.*

*Planning discussions that is properly guided can give very good solutions to problems. People do not naturally accept change easily but if you explain it to them it is easier because then they are on board. We do not always have a plan, it is not always coordinated. We are just scattered. After a good planning session we can move in one direction.*

*I stay away from conflict because I lose it. I can think of one example, a teambuilding intervention. We spoke openly about problems and it was constructive. You got a chance to get it off your chest.*

*One of us was wrong because there was a lack of training. I did not know what was up. I found out my responsibilities. I apologised but I know that it is the mines fault because I need to do jobs that I am not trained in and it makes conflict.*

*The conflict was mediated by someone and they came to a good solution. You could get it off your chest and you could also talk about handling future problems better. This can only happen when you can talk openly without the fear of being victimised.*

*Yes, there was conflict between two departments. They were blaming each other for a breakdown. They had to work together to solve the problem but we first had to discuss it to get a mutual understanding. It really improved the relationship. We need to do that before we start blaming each other.*

6.2 Follow up: do you think the two groups/people wanted to achieve the same thing?

*Yes we wanted to achieve higher production and less downtime.*

*We got the same vision in the end but the training did not happen again and the positive feelings went away. We were back to our old ways in two weeks.*

*Goals differ depending on the people. This time it worked out well.*

*They definitely understood each other better and could work towards the same goals. The results of a personality test made a lot of sense. We saw that everyone was a lot alike and that made us butt heads because we were trying to achieve the same things in different ways. They all think that they are right. I have mellowed out the last year but most people are still the same.*



*Definitely, we wanted to get production.*

*Yes definitely*

7. How important do you think are the things that people fight about?

*They fight about money. We are all here for your families and that is why money is such an issue.*

*Mostly we fight about important things but people do not listen to each other. They don't care about each other's problems. They just say that they don't get paid to listen to "this nonsense". Then no work gets done because it is important for a manager to listen.*

*It has to do with communication. There are serious things but the way that we address them are not up to standard.*

*It depends; some of them can fight about useless things. They waste time. In their eyes it is important. One of them at least. On the other side people can also fight about important production related things.*

*No, they fight about nonsense. It is petty stuff. As soon as you want to address something they attack you. They are so defensive. Inside they know that they are not doing what they are supposed to be doing. Small stupid things become huge fights because people are so defensive. They drag stuff out for 5 years and they build up frustration and resentment.*

*Of the conflict 60% are important and 40% are not important issues. It is not even necessary to fight, just fix it.*

*It is nitty -gritty stuff, it is just to show that they have power. "It is my way and that is just how it is going to be". It is like "I am going to show you". Everyone is very vindictive.*

*Yes, they fight about very important things because it relates to production. If production is reduced our costs would increase.*

8. What situation or action would reduce the negative emotions in a conflict situation at work?

*Discussions should be open and focused on the problem. We can use EAP's to solve people problems.*

*Facilitation session and training on how to deal with conflict. More individual sessions because in a group people keep quiet. Show more appreciation. Say thank you, upwards and downwards. People never say thank you.*

*People should dialog and not fight. They should listen to each other.*

*People must take pride in their work. They must be held accountable: "I don't know" is not an acceptable excuse. Communication is a big issue. We talk but we don't listen. There is a gap between the levels. There are allow of misunderstandings and no one takes responsibility. They think in silos.*

*More structure in meetings so that they can vent in a controlled environment.*

*More teambuilding. After the last one things started to cool down a bit. They understand each other better. They attack the problem. We need more of that, we need to practice these things and keep on improving.*

*If people talk more with each other. Communication is listening too. Sometimes you listen but you don't understand because while the other person is talking you make your own ideas in your head.*

*If they can pay people the same as the other mines and send people for development.*

9. What situation or action would increase the negative emotions in a conflict situation at work?

*If they don't change the situation and motivate people more (with motivation I mean money). They are not happy with what they earn.*

*Even less communication. They say that it is "may way or the high way". They just blame each other. Even in the meetings they scream and walk out. They butt heads every day. They smile on the outside but then they gossip.*

*Not listening. They are not willing to help each other. They just want to do their jobs and go home. They don't care.*

*They leave breakdowns for each other to fix. It makes them very mad and then they even want to go and assault each other at their homes.*

*A lack of self discipline. They should exercise some self control. They disrespect others and then conflict gets worse.*

*If you personalise the conflict it gets far worse. People get defensive.*

*If you ignore it. Like in august it just exploded. One of the managers just left and a new manager came. He was very green. He needs to be guided or he will move from a mover to a destroyer. He tried to get production up but he approached it in a very attacking way. He gets peoples backs up. He micromanagers and has no tact. I could see it in a few seconds. He makes ridiculous comments and the team started to revolt. He needed to be moved because he could not change his approach.*

*Breakdowns just flare up unresolved things. They tolerate but they don't respect each other. Blame games are played. They don't own up to their mistakes and then old stuff comes up again.*

*More pressure will make the conflict worse. You might be told to fix something but in the mean time you might be waiting for spares. They don't care about you; they just want the job done. They want production.*

*No communication skills. We can't say when we feel pressured or neglected.*

*Forced decisions make it worse. You need to ask the whole team or they won't take responsibility. Everything that goes wrong is blame shifting. No one thinks that they are wrong but they are quick to say "I told you so".*

*Failure to address the conflict will increase the negativity. There are always issues between the teams. There is underlying tension. Some might say it is because they are jealous of our salaries and others might say that they don't have any standard. It is bad competition.*

#### 10. What do you feel when you are in a conflict situation?

Emotions	Body	Behavior
<i>I am angry and I want to fight. I stress because I know that I cannot hit him because then I am jobless.</i>	<i>My body feels tired and I don't want to work anymore. I also get very hot.</i>	<i>I walk away and after I cool down I will approach him.</i> <i>I act professional and I keep calm.</i>
<i>I feel stress, frustration and anger.</i>	<i>I get stomach sores and I stress.</i>	<i>I walk away and I relax.</i>
<i>I feel aggravated and frustrated.</i>	<i>I shake.</i>	<i>I go into crisis management mode. Everyone should be busy sorting something out.</i>
<i>I get angry because I am usually very passionate about my stance.</i>	<i>I use my hands a lot and I clench my fists.</i>	<i>I try and take everything calmly so that I can understand the person. If he is angry I tell him to relax.</i>
<i>If he is attacking I will override him. I express my</i>	<i>I get tense and I clench my fists.</i>	<i>Sometimes he will just walk</i>
	<i>I feel pressure on my</i>	

<p><i>rage openly.</i></p> <p><i>I don't know, I don't focus on my emotions.</i></p> <p><i>Anger and frustration. I just want to hit the guy.</i></p> <p><i>I feel hurt and angry.</i></p>	<p><i>chest.</i></p> <p><i>My heart is painful.</i></p>	<p><i>away. That is so disrespectful. Then I lose my temper. They say what they want and then leave before I can also speak my mind! Why must I say I am sorry when I never had the opportunity to speak my mind? That sorry sits in my chest.</i></p> <p><i>I just listen and when I don't feel so hurt I will talk to them because I will say something I don't want to say.</i></p>
<p>How do you handle your emotions?</p>	<p>How do you handle the effects on your body?</p>	<p>Do you think that your behavior is helpful?</p>
<p><i>I don't want to talk to them. I just listen when they scream and then ignore them until I feel better.</i></p> <p><i>My emotions get worse when I don't know what to do about the conflict. I can't talk about the conflict. I can't talk to others because they cannot keep it for themselves. News spreads like a wildfire here. They are all jackals.</i></p> <p><i>I am a religious man. I think first before I act. I try and understand the other person's shoes.</i></p> <p><i>I talk to people who have a</i></p>	<p><i>I will talk to a colleague to get guidance.</i></p> <p><i>I drink a lot of relaxation pills. I can never do anything right. They want to do what they want to do and they treat you like trash. But I can't do anything to stand up for myself because I will get fired.</i></p> <p><i>I try and relax.</i></p> <p><i>I rub my fingers and I try not to look them in the eye because if I see them also getting frustrated I will explode.</i></p>	<p><i>Yes because then you don't say something bad.</i></p> <p><i>I retract form giving my best because if end up doing the shitty jobs. They take over on everything else. My experience means nothing. They don't trust me to do my job.</i></p> <p><i>I try and understand. I ask questions to get their perspective. You also need to be assertive or you will become a doormat.</i></p> <p><i>I try and get the last word in and then I just walk away. It makes people very angry but</i></p>

<p><i>calming effect on me or I build up to a crescendo and explode.</i></p> <p><i>Shouting and screaming used to help. It does not help anymore. I will walk away if it gets too bad. Then I try and turn it into a humorous event. They can sort it out on their own for the rest of the day.</i></p> <p><i>I know that if I lose my temper I might lose my job.</i></p> <p><i>I keep quiet because I will get violent. I will just cause you pain in the future.</i></p> <p><i>I control my emotions and walk away.</i></p>	<p><i>I smoke a lot but at least I have stopped the drinking.</i></p> <p><i>I have medicine for the stomach sores but I have ended up in hospital.</i></p> <p><i>There is a weight on my shoulders if I do not resolve the conflict. But it does not happen often.</i></p>	<p><i>it gives me power because then I don't explode. If they explode then I have won because I am in control. Later I will go back and try and sort it out. I push buttons because if you can get people to lose their cool you are in control.</i></p> <p><i>When I walk away it helps because then it does not come up again. I get angry in the moment but I can later manage my emotions and I do not keep a grudge.</i></p> <p><i>One the one side it helps to walk away but on the other side it can be hard. People resent you for walking away and they come back at you. The situation never improves.</i></p> <p><i>It does not help to walk away because at the end of the day you need to make a decision. You think about the conflict and you don't work properly. You might even get injured.</i></p> <p><i>It usually works to walk away but sometimes it does not. People stay angry for a long time and it can escalate. They keep it for weeks against you.</i></p>
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11. After the conflict has been resolved do you still feel any of these effects (as if they linger)?

*Yes, even after the conflict has been resolved you feel like the trust is broken even though you are talking to the person. It is as if you trigger quicker to them. Unless you block it out completely and I cannot do that. It is at the back of my mind.*

*No, I get along with most people but I do try to avoid the person for a while.*

*I go home and I can't forget. I have trouble sleeping and I stress about going to work. I used to have sleeping pills but now I can't because I am on standby. They fight and they scream at you if you don't respond to standby calls but they don't ask you if you are on pills. They don't care about you as a person.*

*They slam doors and they hit things and they kick things when they are angry. I get headaches and my neck tenses up.*

*I stay irritated. Sometimes I feel relieved it has been solved as of a weight has been lifted off your shoulders. Other times it stays a thorn on your side.*

*Sometimes I do feel tense of a while. You will never forget it despite resolving the issue. You don't feel the pain anymore but you do remember.*

*It is like a pain on my chest. You stay worried and you stay stressed about it because you don't know what is happening behind your back.*

*If you cut your foot and you just go on it festers. It gets worse and you lose your foot. That is what happens here. We talk about things but no one implements. It never truly gets solved. People go to bed angry.*

*It is normal for people here to just jump to paperwork. They don't want to handle conflict, they just want to prosecute. They threaten people to do that as well: "I will fire you if you don't". it is as if they say "I am a manager and you can't do anything to me". They just through power around and they don't listen.*

*Yes there is always something left behind. If someone hurt me I can't get over it at the same time. I will think about it for maybe 2-3 months after it happened.*

12. How do most people handle conflict at the shaft?

Between a co-worker	Between a supervisor	Between a subordinate
<p><i>They scream and make noise. Sometimes they don't want to go to work because of it.</i></p> <p><i>They just want to hit one another. They don't want to hear any reason. They just want to sort it out with their fists. Then they walk away and they burry their anger for another day.</i></p> <p><i>They withdraw, put their heads in their hands and stay away form the conflict. It remains unresolved. Tomorrow they will tell you "I told you so". I just keep quiet aswell. I don't want to prolong the meetings aswell.</i></p> <p><i>Generally they avoid it and then their bring it to their supervisors to sort out. They sit in my office every day because they cannot handle their own conflict. They want the supervisor to make a decision. They don't want the responsibility.</i></p> <p><i>Once someone through someone with a piece of metal. That was a violent outburst. It is because of constant conflict that he just snapped.</i></p> <p><i>They fight, scream and swear. They fight but they don't report it because they will get in trouble.</i></p>	<p><i>They also scream but in a group. They come to the supervisor in numbers.</i></p> <p><i>They will ignore it but they will remember it forever. The supervisor never sais sorry so they will hold it against him. They are always the hero and you are the villan.</i></p> <p><i>When you try and question them they avaiod the conflict.</i></p> <p><i>They don't address the subordinate. They will rather fight a co-worker about the subordinate. It is as if they are scared of disciplining their own subordinates. They are inexperienced.</i></p> <p><i>They shout and scream at each other but it is not very productive. It turns into a "festering pile of goo". The subordinate looses respect for you.</i></p> <p><i>They avoid the conflict because they are scared to being victimised. They say that there are "ways to get rid of you". They will use safety compliance and set you</i></p>	<p><i>He promises the employee a grievance. He threatens the employee. That is why people are scared to say some of the things that bother them.</i></p> <p><i>They disrespect their employees. They scream and walk away. They don't allow them as say a word so they will sware at you and you cant do anything.</i></p> <p><i>The majority protect their subordinates because they want to avoid conflict. They handle the issues in their own ways. They don't nesisarily handle it well but they try and maintain relationships. Before the teambuilding however things were realy bad.</i></p> <p><i>They run to the union very quickly for formal action. They threaten each other with formal action against them.</i></p> <p><i>Sometimes they call the guy into the office and discuss it behind closed doors but 50% of the time it is not resolved and it lingers.</i></p> <p><i>Everyone threatens. You can feel the tension.</i></p>

<p><i>They will flip out and complain to the supervisor. It pops up suddenly. They keep quiet until they had enough. The pressure builds and the resentment becomes too much to handle. They have a lot of pressure because they have to do the others work.</i></p> <p><i>Mostly it does get solved but we can see all the grudges. It is crazy. The relationship is not the same as before. It takes a long time to rebuild.</i></p> <p><i>Blame shifting happens a lot. They can get furious in meetings because they through each other with stuff and stay cross for weeks on end. Everyone just watches. The manager should step in but they also grab at each other.</i></p>	<p><i>up. They threaten you behind closed doors.</i></p> <p><i>They will come and discuss it with the supervisor and sometimes they will make it a formal complaint.</i></p> <p><i>They keep it here (points to his head) and they don't solve it openly. It is like they are scared to "go to the principal". I have seen grudges develop. It comes up again because you remember. You dig up old things.</i></p>	<p><i>They don't talk and it hangs in the air. Everyone just do what they are told. They get called into the office for a closed door discussion. Other people just complain by someone else. They don't want to resolve it themselves. They just say: "I can't work with this guy".</i></p> <p><i>They just give orders. They want it their way but it is unfair. They just give orders and don't listen. Then the person stays cross for a long time.</i></p> <p><i>A strict approach is needed in this company. It is to lose. People do what they want and no action is taken.</i></p>
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13. If you are in a destructive/bad conflict situation what do you think the outcomes are for:

You	The other party	The company/ your employer
<p><i>It is a breach of trust. The working relationship is no longer open to that person. If I have something to share I won't. There might be some information but teamwork is gone.</i></p> <p><i>You are not doing what you are supposed to do.</i></p>	<p><i>I can see that he experiences the same stuff as you do but I don't give a shit.</i></p> <p><i>He is also negative and distracted. But I think that they keep it against you and use it to make your work difficult.</i></p> <p><i>I don't care. As long as he</i></p>	<p><i>There is a loss of production, stress, absenteeism, slow strikes, losses and production costs get very high.</i></p> <p><i>Productivity goes down. You won't go the extra mile; you only do what you need to do to keep out of trouble. You are not working towards a shared goal anymore.</i></p>



<p><i>Your head is not where it is supposed to be.</i></p> <p><i>I feel physical and mental stress.</i></p> <p><i>I recover quickly. It is them that can't deal with it though.</i></p> <p><i>Usually I try to mend things with the person. Like a debriefing. One on one but in his comfort zone. If you call him in he is immediately defensive.</i></p> <p><i>I always try and go for a win-win.</i></p> <p><i>Physical stress, heart problems and anxiety. I stay angry because I just have to take it.</i></p> <p><i>I don't want to go to work. I stay angry. I try to pretend at home that everything is o.k. because I will hurt my family.</i></p>	<p><i>gets into trouble. Someone else can sort it out.</i></p> <p><i>Often they will hold a grudge. They ignore you or give sarcastic answers. That plays a big role.</i></p> <p><i>Emotional strain and issues. They take things very personally.</i></p> <p><i>I don't know. I think that they are disrespectful and I don't care how they feel.</i></p> <p><i>They will abuse sick notes or just stay home.</i></p>	<p><i>Possible future mine closure. All the fighting will cause the mine to close because everyone is frustrated and negative. Production is low but some of the guys don't get it. They just say that it will never happen.</i></p> <p><i>Negativity because of the conflict will influence production.</i></p> <p><i>No production, no teamwork and an unhappy and bad culture. Everyone is affected.</i></p> <p><i>The company is trying very hard to address the issues but the employees still have a win-lose mentality.</i></p> <p><i>The problem with this company is a people problem. Meetings are useless and disrupted. It is a waste of time because there is a blame game but no consequence management.</i></p> <p><i>The company is going down. Lots of absenteeism means that we won't produce.</i></p>
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#### 14.1 When employees at the shaft are in conflict, do their actions cause your team to lose productivity?

*Yes we do, a lot of production problems can be explained by conflict. It can run smoothly if we can sort it out.*

*Definitely, conflict is one of the main causes of production loss. We can win this thing but we need support to change the people's attitudes. We need to collaborate and not refuse help.*

*Conflict affects production in a bad way. Chances are that the employees will refuse to go underground and work.*

*Yes, even in meetings conflict delays the meetings and the outcomes are not reached.*

*We lose significant production due to the conflict. When employees see you fight they lose respect for you and it creates a toxic environment. Why must they listen to children fighting? Then production is affected.*

*Production targets are not met because they are fighting and it never gets resolved. They are attacking each other. They don't want to report problems because they are scared that they will be attacked.*

*Yes, because if they see each other fighting they get negative and then they will damage something so that they don't have to work. Sabotage happens but you can't prove it so you just have to let it go.*

*Yes, hours could be wasted if not days due to the conflict.*

14.2 Follow up: while the conflict remains unresolved, how often do these negative actions occur?

*People rapped on each other. They nail you for everything. They tip off the security to check you and only you at the gate. You will never know who has the problem with you.*

*The whole time it gets worse but you cannot pinpoint who is targeting you. They do it in such a way that you cannot point fingers. They intentionally do things wrong and they refuse to help each other causing avoidable breakdowns.*

*They will fight every day about the same thing. They will tell each other that they are "sleg" (bad). Will belittle each other and use sarcasm.*

*Conflict is permanent; it is there under the surface waiting to erupt.*

*Often they will see things that are not there. They seek reasons to not do their work. They will also work on a lower levels and refuse to make decisions. Then the situation just escalates.*

*Production just goes down all the way. They keep doing things to get back at each other. Some of the breakdowns are on purpose because they sabotage to create problems for each other.*

*They won't show conflict easily again. They will be more careful: give each other the silent treatment and gossip or avoid each other.*

*We don't produce if we don't resolve the issues.*

### 14.3 Follow up: What do team members and supervisors do to reduce the behaviour?

*We try and talk to them to not fight because they will get into trouble.*

*They send people to anger management training but they send the wrong people.*

*I always intervene but I almost burned my hands and my feet once because the right procedures were not followed so I stepped out.*

*They tend to keep quiet. After some time they would give advice. Maybe we approach it the wrong way.*

*I thin that they avoid conflict by not wanting to talk to the guys. They stay away from a meeting or ignore them. They will get someone else to speak to that person because you cannot stand them.*

*I would like to help my team members but the fight then becomes my problem. The issues always get escalated. Everyone gets involved and suddenly it goes to the top level. No one wants to take responsibility, they just escalate.*

*I can't see anything being done. There is no training to help proper communication. They would rather make the problem someone else's. They shift the problem around.*

*They do nothing. It is your problem and you need to sort it out.*

### 14.4 Follow up: In your opinion are these interventions successful? Why?

*It would be better if an external party could say: "come here, let us get it right". If someone at the shaft gets involved they are also dragged into the conflict. It will only work if the person is respected. There is no respect for one another here.*

*They use bad ways to address the conflict because it is never resolved, the stress is only moved. Some people cannot handle the stress and they will become violent or leave. It is like stepping on a landmine and hoping it won't explode.*

*It is bad for the conflict to escalate the issue. You should sort out your own problems and work together. Teambuilding is not done in the team. It is done with strangers? Not how does that help dialog?*

*Mining people are a breed on their own. We deal with conflict in our own way. Some people drink, smoke or use drugs. Now they cannot use their recreational activities anymore so then there is more conflict.*

*They should intervene and say that they should take a break and calm down rather than be quiet.*

*I am a good negotiator. There are always two sides to a conflict and in most cases they just don't see the other side of the coin. You can just change their perspective.*

*The conflict will be solved if it is because of the job. Personalities can't be changed though. It is too difficult to stop those fights.*

15. If you disagree with someone, how are you expected to express your frustration while at work?

*I don't believe in fighting, even if my boss screams at me.*

*Just leave it. Don't argue and keep it for yourself. Rather walk away and tell others what a fool that guy is.*

*Mining will just put in a grievance because they don't want to talk about it. With engineering they talk in the office and the conflict disappears.*

*Never show you disagree. They want to be praised and never criticised.*

*You can express your conflict in whatever way you want; every now and then someone will bring in some sanity and calm you down.*

*People storm out in frustration and the matter never gets resolved. Just don't get in fights where your supervisor can see you. When people cannot see then they will target you.*

*It is too hard to try and manage emotions. No one wants to admit that they are wrong.*

*It is not acceptable to scream and call names. Do to others what you want to have done to yourself. If one guy screams you will also start screaming. You will react to his emotions and then it gets worse. The norm here is screaming at this stage. It has always been bad like this.*

*People are often absent, they abuse alcohol because there is a lack of social activities in the area to reduce the stress.*

*To grab someone by the shirt is not good but it happens.*

16. Have you ever felt like something bad happened to someone because they were unfair (they deserved it)?

*Some of the thing you cannot point out that they did something wrong and then when something happens it is what they deserved. Sometimes you can use a grudge to get someone fired.*

*I try not to feel happy but the wheel is turning.*

*No, I always feel bad for the guy.*

*Yes, I often feel that way. Payback is bitch.*

*Yes, going behind peoples back and gossiping. They say bad things and it reduces his credibility. He makes them feel like dogs so if they gossip about him it is his own doing.*

*Yes, there was a guy that was absent often and I had to address the issue. He made false accusations at me but he resigned. I was glad that he left. If you don't work you must not eat.*

*Never, I feel that no one deserves something bad to happen to them. I like to help people.*

17. What would you change in your working environment so that conflict is better managed?

*To get it right they need to bring back job cards. So that people have a joint understanding. They will understand because you need to discuss the job card before you issue it. You can also enforce the job because they need to sign for it. Things don't get done because they deny you have given an instruction.*

*We need to keep out promises. When managers are under pressure they promise things but they do not consult with the specialists and then there is no delivery. They don't trust anyone anymore because people do not keep promises. It has happened too much.*

*No one is accountable because butts into everyone's business. Everyone feels useless because nothing is ever right. There are mixed instructions from different people and there is then missed deadlines.*

*If you want to address conflict no one listens, they just send you to EAP as a result. I don't know that they are thinking. I don't want to worry that that guy will come to my house and*

*shoot me. I have to order things but they don't worry about my feelings. They have the answers to the questions before I ask and if I can't give them those answers they just blank out and refuse to listen to you.*

*More teambuilding sessions. Maybe make a problem solving crew that can target problem areas. Things that cause conflict are repetitive problems that are never solved. And more social activities so that the people can relax.*

*Upgrade everyone? Give them the tools to deal with different people in conflict. So that they don't just use one style.*

*More accountability and better consequence management. Ensuring that the people who are appointed take pride in their work.*

*Send everyone on a dialog course and then people need to check up on those people that they use dialog skills at work. Everyone is stressed about production but if you take the stress and the pressure away there will be less conflict. But then again there will be no production. Well I guess it is difficult. Maybe we can teach them to deal with pressure better.*

*We need more teambuilding to understand our people. Go on teambuilding with your team and not people from other teams. Everyone is different and you need to understand the people that you work with as individuals. Talk to them about their personal issues because it comes to work. Also give them the opportunity to talk to you about their problems. Stand back and let them talk about their feelings. Here no one has genuine interest in their employees. They don't care.*

*We need better communication and we need trust but I don't know how to do that. We need someone to take charge and get the discipline in order. EAP's are being underutilised because when you go to an EAP you need to sign when you come back that you went to an EAP. Your sick leave is under investigation and then there is no confidentiality.*

*Teambuilding is done with people you don't even know.*

## APPENDIX E: SHAFT 8 INTERVIEW RAW DATA

1. Describe to me the emotional environment in which you are you currently working? (How do people talk to each other? What is the atmosphere like?)

*Sometimes the atmosphere is good but sometimes the operators think that the managers do not communicate. They complain that managers make changes without consulting and training them.*

*It varies from day to day. Every day has its own difficulties. All the conflict here is linked to production. When we are pressured we talk to each other to hastily and with less respect. Most days are not difficult.*

*In engineering there is very little to no conflict. We work well as a team. Between mining and engineering there is a feud but it is manageable. People are quite tolerant. We try to support each other. We are not patient people but we tolerate others. There are some things that mining can do that can make me very upset but overall the atmosphere is good.*

*Overall the atmosphere is good. But at times it gets stressful. It depends on the things that go wrong. Sometimes there is conflict between mining and engineering (I am being as polite as I can be by saying "conflict").*

*Mostly it is great. The guys that I work with are good. They respect each other.*

*There are some individuals that make problems. Some of them are in management. On our level we do not have problems. There are some instigators though. They are not wrong; it just is their way of doing things. We have a good atmosphere; it is relaxed and we produce. It is all about people skills.*

*The atmosphere is not good now. There is a lot of conflict between top management and lower levels. New standards are being implemented and the people are not happy. Like the sick leave counseling discussions; you have to do an investigation when someone is sick because some people abuses sick leave. But there are guys that are really sick and they go underground when they are sick because they are scared. There are a lot of other things as well. People have to do double work now and it makes them sick.*

*All depends on the levels. Here we have a good understanding with each other. There is a good atmosphere.*

## 2. Describe to me how you define conflict? What is conflict?

*It is a disagreement if interest and sometimes morals.*

*It is a disagreement n the road to achieving the same goal. Especially at this shaft. We know what we want to do but we disagree on the priorities and the road.*

*Conflict is with words. You don't see eye to eye. You misunderstand and you do not communicate with each other.*

*It is a disagreement between managers and workers.*

*Misunderstandings and poor communication. There are the causes of conflict.*

*Conflict is between two people fighting about procedures that the mine put towards us. You can explain as much as you like, they are still not happy.*

*There are different types of conflict. You cannot get along with subordinates that do not do their work. It can be resistance to instructions. It makes you upset. But people are not easily worked up here. There are a few that tense up quickly but you lean to know them like that.*

*Two people disagreeing on an issue.*

## 3. Do you think conflict is a good or a bad occurrence in a workplace? Why?

*Sometimes conflict is good because it shows in the results. In the end you can sit down and you can get the right conclusion. Conflict is bad when it makes production go down.*

*I don't know if conflict is good or bad. I don't know how it feels to work without it. Days that have a lot of conflict is bad. I would rather stay home but you get that only once or twice a week.*

*There is bad conflict here but it is to a lesser extent. Conflict is inherently good because if we don't question we won't get anywhere. The conflicts that we experience are purely process issues and we can get to a good result.*

*You have to have conflict to identify problems. You also have to get it off your chest.*



*Conflict is bad but it can also be good. It is bad if it makes people be mean to each other. In a good way it can help them show their feelings and sort it out.*

*Conflict is good because it gets all the small misunderstandings out of the way. It is a driver. It opens up communication and clears up misunderstandings. If it is a high level of conflict I tend to move away and let it cool down first. But that has only happened twice in my 16 years here.*

*It is a good thing because you explain to the people the systems and why it is in place. People make an issue of the system. They will still look for an excuse to ignite the conflict again. I think it is due to the current environment in the whole industry.*

*If there is conflict it means that something is happening. There will always be conflict. It shows that someone is doing their jobs.*

4. In your opinion what are the 3 most common reasons for conflict at the shaft in which you work?

*When people cross boundaries, on occasions it does occur. Also the way a person treats you creates perceptions of disrespect, whether you meant it like that or not. On occasion this happens but then it gets better again.*

*Certain personalities will just disagree with absolutely everything. They create conflict. It is purely the approach to the problem and the way that you try and solve things that can cause conflict. In engineering we use structure and reason. Mining just wants to hit the problem with a hammer.*

*A lack of knowledge, misunderstandings and a lack of communication are the three most common reasons for conflict at the shaft.*

*No communication causes conflict.*

*They are not working according to the principles that we learned: planning, leading, organising and controlling. That is why there is conflict.*

*Things that cause conflict are when systems are put in place and the people that use it are not consulted, supervisors go over the heads of the middle managers and also they have conflict about money and the job grading system. They are unhappy because the lowest*

*levels work the hardest but they get paid the least money. I agree that they are being treated unfairly.*

*People are not competent. It is more on the engineering side because on the mining side you don't have to do so much technical stuff. The conflict is also between the departments. Another reason is that we cannot train our people because we do not have replacements for them.*

*They fight about money; especially when they don't get paid right. We have a lot of fights about incentive shifts. People want to work overtime because then they get paid more.*

5.1 Could you give me an example of a destructive/bad conflict situation that you know of? In other words a situation where conflict caused negative results in some elements of productivity or people relationships?

*Breakdowns caused by other people and then there is finger pointing. Everyone gets blamed except the person who caused the problem. He will avoid his responsibilities and avoids being "wrong". We are measured on minimum breakdowns but we are blamed if they break the equipment. We look like fools because they don't want to take the responsibility.*

*When operators complain about job grading. This is the biggest issue at the shaft. Those that are upgraded are comfortable. Those that are not upgraded refuse to be a team player. They refuse to help. We lose a lot of production that way. We talk to them but they refuse to listen anymore. We give them acting allowances as compensation.*

*In a recent meeting there was a big argument about how to issue vehicles. The guy that is doing all the complaining is the one that should be able to resolve it. He generated a lot of emotions that were completely unnecessary. We waste a lot of time in unproductive meetings. After the conflict interventions meetings have become structured and we waste less time.*

*There are no examples of conflict that has not been resolved. Conflict is good because you can sort it out. In the process you set boundaries and understand each other better.*

*Bad conflict does not happen here.*

*I cannot speak for the others but I can see that some people are overworked and then we cannot get to everything. For mining it has to be done "NOW". One time it was not done as*

*they wanted and the guy took me on. It was a huge argument but we also know how to resolve it. It got out of hand bad. I did not want to speak to him for a week but that was good because it let him cool down and then we could resolve it behind closed doors. We understand each other but the way that he approached it was wrong. Maybe I was also wrong.*

*People do not want to work together as a team because they are rewarded differently. Then they do not want to help each other. It costs us a lot of production. During the production incentive shift they are all equally paid and then they produce.*

*If you go to someone the person will make excuses for not doing the work. Things then do not get done. The line of work gets blocked. They do not take responsibility.*

## 5.2 Follow up: do you think the two groups/people wanted to achieve the same thing?

*Everyone wants to be right. Most of the time it is hard to say that you are wrong. Even if it is not in words they will communicate that they are wrong here. They will take ownership of the blame.*

*Yes absolutely, the goal is to ensure that the machines are well controlled. That is what we all want. For some reason it became a big issue. I think it became an outlet. I think it is people trying to make a big noise so that the focus shifts from their incompetence.*

*Everyone wants to get production up but they are pointing fingers. With mining and engineering it is like two people driving in a car, the driver runs over a pothole but the passenger needs to fix it. They then start fighting over the problem and they don't just fix it.*

*They have the same goal; to produce. Sometimes you just need to remind them that they are after the same thing.*

*There are a few people that are here just for the picture. Just to fill the space. They do not fulfill the responsibilities. They are the source of conflict.*

*Yes definitely, they want more production and more bonuses.*

*Definitely but the difference lies in your priorities. We want everything in our sections to run smoothly but we want to get there in different ways.*

6.1 Could you give me an example of a constructive/good conflict situation that you know of? In other words a situation where conflict caused positive results in both productivity and people relationships?

*Sometimes in the section they know that they are there to work. They don't just know it they believe it. They are motivated and they produce. The issues of job grading gets in the way sometimes.*

*I cannot think of any.*

*There are a few examples. One guy wanted to formally complain another employee but he did not have all the information. The disagreement on whether to proceed or not ended in a good result because we would have wasted everyone's time if we would have proceeded with a case that has no merit.*

*With the tractor drivers everyone wants to use them and everyone always thinks that their goals are the most important. They go over your head. But we had a discussion and we prioritised job as well as make the line of authority clear. Now it is better.*

*I cannot think of anything.*

*It is actually very easy. There is a good worker that I have. He is excellent but he moans a lot and about everything. Every day he is in my office and he bypasses his foreman. I told him that that is not how it works and that it is not acceptable to bypass your supervisor. We had an open discussion behind closed doors. Since then he is going to his foreman. He was a problem child due to the moaning but he has changed so much that he has since been promoted.*

*The production workers get rewarded for production targets but not the support staff. We have solved it by saying we will give them something to. You need to fight for your people and ensure that they are also rewarded for good work.*

*I cannot think of any conflict that results in good things. All the jobs are half-half and "do it over".*

6.2 Follow up: do you think the two groups/people wanted to achieve the same thing?

*We decided to clarify what is the best for the company.*

*Yes we have the same goals, we want to ensure a running section. There is only conflict in terms of process.*

*Yes.*

*Definitely yes.*

*Definitely*

7. How important do you think are the things that people fight about?

*No they do not fight about important things. They should tackle the concerns immediately before it turns into a fight. They could have solved it earlier.*

*Sometimes they just make a mountain of a moles heap. Mostly.*

*Petty nonsense. Most things are small. Most arguments is because someone is blaming someone else. No one wants to take responsibility. It happens at least once a day. It is not hectic though.*

*Most people use the conflict as an opportunity to vent. It is a small thing that explodes. It all goes back to communication. You never know how bad the guys personal life can be so then something small can put them off. We should all see when people are struggling. Know when your colleague needs help.*

*They fight about important things because people must be treated equally. This morning we had a situation again where the lower levels took on top management again but it was explained and resolved. It opened up communication. In a team he will definitely listen.*

*Sometimes they are fighting about nitty-gritty stuff. They are always ready to fight back the facts. They attack you because they see you as attacking them. It is like pay back and it happens often.*

*The conflict is always important. Except one guy that can make a mountain of a mole heap. 90% if the time it is production related and we have to solve it to get a mutual understanding. I like conflict because it is good conflict.*

*They fight about important things because it affects careers and production.*

8. What situation or action would reduce the negative emotions in a conflict situation at work?

*Cool down first and then start again when you are calmer. When both parties are cross they regret their actions.*

*More maturity. Understanding that we are all here to achieve the same thing and not blame one another*

*Communication and respecting each other will reduce the negativity.*

*We should have meetings specifically to address the conflict so that it does not come up in other meetings.*

*If they can pay more attention to Individual development plans. I will look at the conflict, try and understand both parties, find the real causes and then find a solution.*

*You need to be open-minded and calm. When the conflict gets big then you must withdraw, give him space and go back to communicate. He must first give his view. I always want to see where I can assist.*

*If they use the line management properly and not jump the line of authority the conflict will be less. Management does not have the personality knowledge that I have of my team. If you address it with that knowledge you get double done.*

*You must always have a witness to listen to their real concerns. You think you understand but you miss important stuff.*

9. What situation or action would increase the negative emotions in a conflict situation at work?

*If we don't give feedback regularly to the employees we will have a total crisis.*

*A bossy attitude and forcefulness. Pretending that you are all knowing will make the conflict worse.*

*Poor information and not motivating changes will make conflict.*

*We have healthy relationships. Even though we fight we manage it. We do not have a big problem with conflict.*

*Like this morning; if you don't give people the opportunity to talk then it makes the conflict worse. You need to listen. It happens often; they should keep quiet and listen to the problem. Give everyone an opportunity to talk.*

*Not following the right line of authority and bad communication will make conflict worse. If one of my people go to speak to the other supervisors they do not know how to approach the guy and then there is conflict.*

*It does not happen a lot but maybe once a week there is a small scuffle. The thing that increases conflict is production stress.*

*If I chose sides then that will make the conflict worse. The other guy might feel targeted.*

10. What do you feel when you are in a conflict situation?

Emotions	Body	Behavior
<p><i>Angry.</i></p> <p><i>I am not a fan of conflict. I get angry and frustrated.</i></p> <p><i>I feel angry and frustrated and I feel powerless.</i></p> <p><i>I have bad feelings. I feel sorry for the people who get in the mess but it has to be resolved.</i></p> <p><i>I feel under pressure to resolve the conflict.</i></p> <p><i>I am a thinker when it comes to conflict. I want to see his point of view first.</i></p> <p><i>I do not fight. There is always ways to sort it out. I use my skills in managing conflict. I practice what I learn.</i></p> <p><i>It feels like you are not doing something right. I feel disappointed in myself.</i></p>	<p><i>Tense and I get headaches.</i></p> <p><i>I tense up and I can feel it in my shoulders. My shoulders pull up and I cross my arms.</i></p> <p><i>I rub my forehead and I get headaches.</i></p> <p><i>I stress and tomorrow I do not want to go to work.</i></p> <p><i>I do not check what I feel in my body.</i></p> <p><i>I get hot and flustered.</i></p> <p><i>If the conflict is very stressful my hands shake. That does not happen often.</i></p> <p><i>You start to get aggressive if you know that you are wrong, but I know how to</i></p>	<p><i>I discuss the problems. If the emotions are too high then I will ask the person if we can discuss it later.</i></p> <p><i>I have steps: I listen carefully to try and understand the hidden meanings. I do sometimes get swept into the moment but when I realise that I go back to listening. I would like to have more control over my emotions.</i></p> <p><i>I will walk away and try and avoid it. I just do the job and try and avoid the emotions. I know that I am right and that is ok. If the other person does not see it,</i></p>

	<p><i>work with people and I calm down and I listen. I don't have to feel threatened.</i></p>	<p><i>it is not my problem.</i></p> <p><i>I will go to my supervisor to mediate the situation.</i></p> <p><i>I will try to behave normally. I don't want to panic, I just stay calm.</i></p> <p><i>I am never aggressive. I just am not an aggressive person.</i></p> <p><i>I get very quiet and I plan what I will say. The wrong word can put you in trouble.</i></p> <p><i>I behave in the proper manner. I stay calm. You must calm yourself down or you will get in a big conflict and then the aggression just flares.</i></p>
<p>How do you handle your emotions?</p>	<p>How do you handle the effects on your body?</p>	<p>Do you think that your behavior is helpful?</p>
<p><i>I cannot just attack them even though I feel like it. We need to talk it out.</i></p> <p><i>It is not easy but I choose to keep quiet and walk away. I want to just attack the guy.</i></p>	<p><i>I push myself to go to work because we need to sort out the issues.</i></p> <p><i>I try and think happy thoughts.</i></p>	<p><i>Sometimes it helps to go to my supervisor.</i></p> <p><i>I remember what happened and I try to avoid the guy at all costs.</i></p>



<p><i>I like to consider all the facts and get both sides of the story. Data is your best friend.</i></p> <p><i>I walk away and I cool down.</i></p> <p><i>I listen and I give proper feedback. Some things you cannot help, you need to consult other people. The systems that management put in place makes you feel worthless because you cannot do something to change it if the people are upset.</i></p> <p><i>Know about the person's background, and then you will know how to approach him.</i></p> <p><i>I have to calm myself down and I drink a cool drink. It gives me time to think.</i></p>	<p><i>I stay conscious of my body and my emotions. When I realise that it is getting out of control I remind myself that it is not worth the frustration. It is part of being in the game for a long time.</i></p> <p><i>It lingers for a time but once the conflict is resolved it goes away. I drink a couple of pills and it helps.</i></p> <p><i>I will walk to someone and debrief.</i></p> <p><i>If we resolved it or not it is like you are shaking for a while after that. I drink water and I think of a bible verse.</i></p>	<p><i>I have been here for a long time and I have learned to stay calm. I have learned patience.</i></p> <p><i>Most people are not aggressive here. I start smiling when they come into my office. I know what it is about and I cannot help but smile. 80% of the times it breaks the ice.</i></p> <p><i>If you become emotional then it is difficult to resolve</i></p>
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11. After the conflict has been resolved do you still feel any of these effects (as if they linger)?

*I speak to my wife but I still get headaches.*

*I used to go home with a lot of frustration but not anymore. I have grown beyond that. I am not immune to conflict so thought do re-occur.*

*If I leave then I am very tense. The emotions stay a couple of hours.*

*Sometimes I keep on thinking about it. I keep on thinking why I did not see it coming.*

*No, I will feel fine. I will check that he is also o.k. and that there is no anger.*

*I shake for a few minutes but resolve all my arguments. I will always resolve even if it takes a week for us to cool down. You need to talk it out. I think that is why I get along with most people.*

*Some of the things look resolved but they are not. There is no trust. They must learn to trust.*

*No not really because you feel good when you have solved a problem. You don't want to talk to them if it is not resolved. Most conflicts are not resolved because a lot of the things that they are angry about you cannot solve for them.*

12. How do most people handle conflict at the shaft?

Between a co-worker	Between a supervisor	Between a subordinate
<p><i>Some supervisors just think that their employees are lazy. Some shout and scream but most talk lower. You can still see that their faces are angry.</i></p> <p><i>They scream at each other and use foul language.</i></p> <p><i>Power is a big thing. They try and win the argument. Some of them just give up. Agreeing with everything is just as bad as conflict.</i></p> <p><i>They shout but it does not happen a lot. Tempers flare and then they speak louder and sometimes it does happen in public.</i></p> <p><i>They actually work together to solve problems. The conflict is between them and management. They will stand</i></p>	<p><i>Higher levels talk calmly and they listen to each other. The lower levels shout.</i></p> <p><i>If the supervisor does not stay calm then they will run and put a grievance against him or they will go over your head and complain to a person higher than you. It happened only once to me. I have learned to support and now I do better. We know that you need to bond with your subordinates. Everyone is human and you need to be fair.</i></p> <p><i>There is always conflict. They want to see you as a group. They don't want to see you one on one.</i></p> <p><i>I can see that there is no respect for formal positions anymore. You will be busy with</i></p>	<p><i>Sometimes they shout but they come back and then talk calmly.</i></p> <p><i>If you lose it you get in trouble so you try and stay calm.</i></p> <p><i>They try and explain what the employee did wrong most of the time you will get the silent treatment. But you need to tell the person that that type of behavior is not helpful. You can only get a result when you establish mutual trust. No one may discipline my people except me.</i></p> <p><i>They handle it calmly.</i></p> <p><i>I can see it is difficult for them because they have</i></p>

<p><i>together as a team.</i></p> <p><i>We are to strict with each other. But I know that times change and it is time to relax. It is a new world and we need to adapt to the youngsters. It is very difficult.</i></p> <p><i>With most people when they see conflict they get on their back heels and defend themselves. They should rather stand back and listen. They get to emotional.</i></p> <p><i>They resolve it well. They approach each other calmly and it is good.</i></p>	<p><i>a meeting and they will just interrupt. They say things that are disrespectful and they are negative.</i></p> <p><i>There aren't very big problems but there is a syndrome that "I want what I want when I want it". People are generally accommodating with a few exceptions. Even the exceptions will give you the reasons why and that helps me understand.</i></p> <p><i>Normally they are scared to approach the supervisor. This is not a good thing because they need to clear it up. I don't know why they are scared.</i></p>	<p><i>to deal with incompetence and hat is frustrating. They reprimand but they take a relaxed approach to it.</i></p> <p><i>You get to know people and then you know what to do. If they get upset give him a beverage. It gives him time to think and to cool down. Most people are calm though.</i></p> <p><i>Normally you call them into the office, listen to their stories and try and figure out the main reasons for the conflict.</i></p>
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13. If you are in a destructive/bad conflict situation what do you think the outcomes are for:

You	The other party	The company/ your employer
<p><i>I stress because I cannot deliver. If I can't do my job then what am I worth to the company?</i></p> <p><i>No one wins. Personally it is frustrating and it makes me less co-operative. The other person as well. The relationship becomes tarnished.</i></p>	<p><i>Emotions are like flue. The whole team will get infected. You need to get conflict sorted out.</i></p> <p><i>I think he enjoys the conflict. These guys just go looking for it.</i></p> <p><i>We sort it out, shake hands and forget about it. Most people will still feel</i></p>	<p><i>The job will not be done properly.</i></p> <p><i>Good ideas will be muted.</i></p> <p><i>Production is lower. You won't go out of your way to help someone. You just do what you have to, to stay out of trouble.</i></p> <p><i>If we cannot handle the conflict then you will end up with violent</i></p>

<p><i>I get stressed and I get headaches. I feel emotionally belittled. This does not happen very often. You just have to take it from whom it comes.</i></p> <p><i>I feel bad for me because that guy does not care about my standpoint.</i></p> <p><i>After we have resolved the conflict we need to agree on the action. I forget about it and I move on. I do not hold grudges. It does take time to forget.</i></p> <p><i>I have never had conflict that did not end positive.</i></p> <p><i>For me I have forgotten about the conflict in 15min. I don't keep grudges. I don't even name it again.</i></p> <p><i>If there is a good outcome it builds trust.</i></p>	<p><i>hurt but time heals. I give him some time to relax.</i></p> <p><i>We resolve issues and our communication will improve a hell of a lot. Conflict helps.</i></p> <p><i>They learn that I am strict but I do help them solve the problem. They get to know me.</i></p> <p><i>They know that they can come to you with problems.</i></p>	<p><i>strikes.</i></p> <p><i>I think that so long as employees are negative that production will be affected.</i></p> <p><i>Mostly good outcomes. When top management does not communicate with the lower ranks then it gets bad.</i></p> <p><i>There is a loss in production and productivity.</i></p> <p><i>It shows that you are doing your job to solve conflict at the lowest level.</i></p>
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#### 14.1 When employees at the shaft are in conflict, do their actions cause your team to lose productivity?

*If you have conflict on productions side you will lose production. Like the fight about water at the change house we did not lose. Management does their best but if the conflicts are not resolved it comes back.*

*Yes we lose productivity because of conflict because people give up and mute good ideas. They become hard headed. They just follow instructions and didn't use their own initiative. It is not bad here. These are just examples of some specific instances.*

*I have never seen a person work harder than when they are cross. You finish the job quicker because you want to get it done but you don't go the extra mile.*

*Definitely, they are unhappy because no one wants to listen to them. They will slow strike.*

*Yes*

*100% of production is affected by conflict. We fix things ourselves we are motivated. I think that the other shaft is driven wrong. I can ask my people anything and they will assist. I build confidence in my ability to help them. I don't have to explain everything because they trust me.*

*Yes because they will be negative and then the job won't get done.*

#### 14.2 Follow up: while the conflict remains unresolved, how often do these negative actions occur?

*It depends on the size of the conflict.*

*Yes, they attack each other with words. It is heavy language.*

*It gets bad. To the point where employees loose trust in management. It nearly happened but we were able to fix it in the end.*

*No-one will not want to clear up the conflict. It affects you and it affects the job. You want the job to get done and your co-workers won't help if you don't resolve your conflict. Conflict can be personal or it can be job related. Personal conflict is very difficult but we try and sort it out.*

*He needs to cool down first. We will rather ignore each other to let it settle down but that has only happened once or twice in my career.*

*It stays negative if you do not resolve it. In general most conflicts remain unresolved.*

*They will carry on making it difficult until they have the answers that they are looking for. They will ask you every time that they see you and they will stay unhappy.*

#### 14.3 Follow up: What do team members and supervisors do to reduce the behaviour?

*They raise the conflict situation in meetings so that others know. They try and solve the problems. People can see that management tries their best.*

*They just look at it and then they gossip about it.*

*We structure meetings and do not allow a lot of room for personal rampaging.*

*If I am there I will intervene. I will call them one side and ask them what is wrong. I mediate the situation.*

*They talk to each other and they keep each other calm.*

*It depends for department to department. If we see conflict we call them in and we mediate. I do not know about the others.*

*They chose sides and that is wrong. The moment that you listen to a person tell you about conflict they exaggerate their side of the story. You cannot chose sides based on that. It exasperates the problem but that happens on rare occasions. We resolve things in 10-15 min so it does not get to that.*

*They mediate the situation. Call them into an office and hear both sides of the story.*

#### 14.4 Follow up: In your opinion are these interventions successful? Why?

*Yes medicating works well.*

*Gossiping does not help because the problem is not solved.*

*Yes, they can see that management is committed to solving the issues.*

*Do not ignore people. It offends them. Try and resolve it as soon as possible. If the emotions are very heated cool down and asses the emotional environment first before you talk again.*

*Yes, most of the times it gets resolved.*

*If the other party is not calm then it won't help to talk.*

15. If you disagree with someone, how are you expected to express your frustration while at work?

*Sometimes you shout and you forget to stay calm but you know that it is wrong and you go back to sort it out calmly.*

*The ideal is to evaluate the situation, stay respectful but be assertive. The norm is perfectly the opposite.*

*The ideal is to share your thoughts without being belittled or reprimanded but the reality is that we are expected to share our thoughts but they cut you short and then they are upset with you.*

*You state your case calmly. It is always better to be discreet and do it in private. But if he takes me on in front of a crowd he deserves the same treatment.*

*At this stage people get aggressive because they are frustrated and their problems don't get solved.*

*You are expected to stay calm and wait. The issues will sort itself out.*

*We are expected to have the conflict resolved as soon as possible so that the conflict does not multiply and get more people involved. I agree with that. The less conflict the more production.*

*They may express their emotions but they may not get angry. You are expected to say what you believe but you are not allowed to be rude.*

16. Have you ever felt like something bad happened to someone because they were unfair (they deserved it)?

*No not here.*

*No not really. If I get to know that guy then I feel sorry for them.*

*Yes, you should be disciplined for doing the wrong thing. There are people that you avoid because of the conflict that they cause.*

*No.*

*It depends on how rude the guy was. It very seldom happens but someone got suspended for being rude. He deserved it.*

*I have felt that way but afterwards I do feel sorry for him.*

*Yes it happens often. You treat people like you want to be treated.*

*Yes, you feel guilty for it but if you catch a person for theft they should go to jail.*

17. What would you change in your working environment so that conflict is better managed?

*The top level does not communicate to the lower levels. The line does not have the knowledge we need to fix that communication. This one time one of the employees was not paid correctly and I did not have time to follow up. the employee got very frustrated. He went over my head and then I started to stress. We had a fight because he cannot wait. He does not believe me when I said I am trying. He thinks I am lying. He had no patience. I don't know how to address that guy. Maybe someone else can address him. He just fights. He can even kill me. No one wants to work with him. I don't know what is wrong with him.*

*Change the employee's attitudes. They need to respect each other. Respect is earned. You need to talk to people like you want to be talked to. They will return the favor (good or bad).*

*We need a lot more real time data available because a lot of the conflict stems from misunderstandings.*

*We need more teambuilding IN the team that we operate in.*

*Supervisors must do the work that they are appointed for. Other people are interfering. It causes a lot of conflict and you cannot deal with it even though discipline is supposed to be handled at the lowest level. If they interfere you can't.*

*I already told my people that they may not skip a level of management. It is already getting better.*



*EQ makes a difference. I went on a course and it made a huge difference. It is negative when you force people to go for training. There are courses that are rubbish. The teambuilding is rubbish because they put the wrong people together. People come back and they are so frustrated that they don't want to work. The value of use is very low. We have good teams, we need something deeper.*

*I think the most important one is communication. You need to approach the guy in a good way. It gives you clarity as well. What happens is that people do not approach the other guy and then he has to find out that you were angry from a third party.*