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CONFLICT RESOLUTION AS PANACEA FOR SOCIETAL DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

Many countries are currently volatile and devastated because of conflict. Frictions on many occasions result due to unemployment, bad administration, ethnicity and religious persecution. This paper presents a conceptual analysis of conflicts based on conflict resolution and the

need for conflict as a catalyst for societal development. Many groups and communities have emerged as a result of various skirmishes. Presently, the pursuit of power, unequal distribution of natural resources, environmental differences, desire for security, dependence and autonomy issues usually contributes to conflict. The paper, however, adopts analytical and historical methods of research and thereby suggests and recommends that for various nations to live in peace, there should be respect for individual and community rights, justice, fair play, equity, transparency and a high degree of public morality. The work argues that conflict is endemic in human society since the impulse to violence appears to be an inherent characteristic of humanity. Notwithstanding, in a nutshell, conflict has various advantages and disadvantages.

Introduction

The concepts, conflicts and conflict resolutions are not alien to human society. Conflict as a consequence of human interaction has birthed several conflict resolution mechanisms that society – whether pristine or modern, has come to welcome conflict resolution everywhere as a panacea to societal growth.

The myth that conflict and conflict-provoking issues in human society are counter-productive has been interestingly refuted in recent years. Pieces of evidence are mounting from the literature that effective conflict resolution is a panacea to societal growth. Scholars such as Morgenthau (1948); Asimiea (2020); Adetutu (2022) have based on comparative and empirical studies opined that contrary to opinions held in the past, conflicts as a human engineering process have given birth to resolutions that have enhanced advancement of society. Essentially, it is a near-settled phenomenon that conflicts in the human setting is a sine qua non, and so also are conflict resolution models. However, the effects of conflict resolution in the area of societal development have remained a subject of much discourse in several academics.

In our present paper, we intend to present a conceptual analysis of conflicts and conflict resolution, the theoretical framework of conflicts based on which conflict resolution is a catalyst for societal development. Our immediate objective is to establish, if any, a correlation existing between conflict resolution and societal development. This is because, as revealed in our pilot survey, groups emerge strong with better relations and understanding after conflicts resolutions.

Conceptual Analysis

The inevitability of conflicts in Human Society has given credence to myriads of conflict resolution mechanisms. Therefore, attempts at presenting any meaningful exposé of Conflicts Resolution must necessarily begin with an in-depth analysis of the concept of "conflict"; the various ways conflict manifests in society, the resolution of such conflicts when they inadvertently occur; and how Resolution of Conflicts can enhance Societal development.

Conflict is a broad concept that becomes particularly confusing when we use ambiguous words or phrases like bloody dispute, shouting march, tribal force-off etc. Many people use the word 'conflict' to mean any differences, quarrels, political struggles, and economic or social differences among others. However, like the Red Queen in Alice in Wonderland, where words mean what people say they mean, people turn out to have in mind a broad spectrum of differences; starting with simple arguments and ending in large-scale wars.

Political differences of any kind invariably start with a dispute – a quarrel about something, whether it is chieftaincy stool, border, race, religion, territory or who

is to govern a piece of real state. A conflict starts when one, both or all parties begin to consider settling the dispute with force and other moves aimed at gaining some advantage over the other on the subject of dispute. For this paper, conflict can be described as an encounter with arms, a fight, especially a prolonged struggle, a dashing together of physical bodies, to do battle, to come into collision or to be incompatible. As a mere word, conflict has multiple ranges of references and meanings. These may include a struggle, trial of strength, disagreement, being at odds with, to be inconsistent with among others.

In a nutshell, civilizations affirm conflict between groups and persons as a corollary of individual liberty and therefore, accommodate it also as an attribute of organized political life. Whatever the cause – immediate or remote, or the magnitude and the consequence, the bottom line is that the status quo is shaken. The very eruption of the crisis suggests that the existing pattern has been significantly disturbed and that the relationship between the parties had become politically fluid.

Man in society is daily inundated with desires he would want to see through. However, he has to contend with the desires of others who will also want to push through their

desires and ideas in the world system. Hence conflict is inevitable. Conditions of peace can never be taken for human efforts. This is why Thomas Hobbes maintained that "peace is artificial; while conflict is natural" (Ralph, 1975). It is therefore, not startling that, conflict in one way or the other is endemic in human society since the impulse to violence appears to be an inherent characteristic of humanity and seems to resist total eradiation, the task of organized communities has always revolved around the need for conflict resolution to minimize and control conflicts. The primary concern of all societies has been the establishment of a recognized order; a system of rules governing conducts and relationships which is reasonably certain and evolving – conflicts resolution models.

Conflict resolution has been known as the process of ending a dispute and reaching an agreement that satisfies all parties involved. Since conflict is an essential part of being human, effective conflict resolution is not at all designed to avoid disagreements. In other words, conflict resolution is the process by which a dispute is resolved. It requires both a power-based and an interest-based approach through the simultaneous pursuit of litigation, that is, the use of legal power and negotiation.

Indeed, conflict resolution is conceptualised as the methods or processes that are involved in facilitating the peaceful ending of conflict and retribution. Conflict resolution may be used interchangeably with dispute resolution in which both arbitration and litigation processes are essentially involved. It can be thought to encompass the use of nonviolent resistance measures by conflicting parties in an attempt to promote effective resolution.

During the period of the Cold War, U.S. foreign policymakers had to guide themselves with the possible effect of whatever they did within the context of the big potential conflict in the event of an outright global conflict between NATO and the Warsaw Pact in the centre of Europe. Therefore, to understand conflict management it requires an understanding of conflict. However, not everything can be called conflict. So, conflict can refer to a wide range of differences between parties or between individuals beginning with little arguments to real war. Bloomfield and Moulton (1997:11-12) explain that some authors restrict the word conflict to disputes where the use of force is contemplated and focused on the problem of explaining, predicting and influencing whether force is used or not. This explains the reason why scholars define conflict as

any situation in which individuals or groups with incompatible goals act so as to interfere with others the ability to accomplish what they want.

Any form of disagreement between two or more persons which can lead to a serious confrontation is termed conflict. According to Afzalur (2020:15), all definitions of conflict may include both known and opposing interests and the processes of trying to stop opposing view or views. Again, Nicholson (1992) defines it as an activity that takes place when conscious beings wish to carry out mutually inconsistent acts concerning their wants, needs or obligations. He goes on to infer that conflict is an escalation of a disagreement which is characterized by the existence of conflict behaviour in which beings are actively trying to damage one another.

Conflict as an Agent of Change: A Theoretical Construct

A brief review of theories of International Relations gives us at least a partial explanation of the phenomenon of conflict and conflict resolution as a catalyst for societal change. The Realist theory states that the behaviour of organized political groupings is driven by a quest to attain or retain power. That power has been

sought for and fought over by groups. These groups in the form of clans, villages, or states have remained fundamental central actors in conflicts in the world scene. It is also true that conflicts arise where groups hold divergent views over a subject matter. Here, a common element – the subject matter of interest of parties is registered. It should be noted that in situations where parties seek different ends, causes of conflicts are minimal. Where, however, groups pursue the same interest, conflict becomes inevitable.

Conflict Resolution accommodates the views of all parties to the conflict in the resolution process. Conflict Resolution, therefore, presupposes striking a balance; taking into consideration the interest and core values of parties to the conflict, the immediate effect here is that conflict resolution breeds respect for the views of each party and parties come out of the conflict with a better understanding of each other's view and position. Society is better for it as parties are more emotionally fit to perform tasks. Thinking along this line, it can be inferred that the development of a given society largely depends on the number of conflicts that are resolved successfully.

Inter or intra-group conflict has hinged on groups who seek to maintain the status quo against the groups who

seek to utter the existing pattern. Society is dynamic and what seems to be permanent would appear to be change itself. A conflict indicates that the existing pattern has been uttered, which resolution of conflicts arising therefore involves meeting parties halfway with the aim of resolving the conflict with an air of finality; making society an atmosphere of growth, peace and tranquillity.

In this sense, conflict resolution where parties are satisfied is a change agent. This is because parties with opposing views over an issue shift grounds for the benefit of society. Some scholars, among which are Marx (1917); Webber (1926) and Morgenthau (1948), they pointed out that conflicts are stimulating elements of human engineering, that when properly resolved lead to positive societal development. Contemplating what conflict resolution portends; Mitchel and Banks (1996) posit that it is in an outcome in which the issue in an existing conflict is satisfactorily dealt with through a solution that is mutually acceptable to the parties thereto, that were previously hostile adversaries and processes or procedure by which such an outcome is achieved:

> On his part, Best (2005:92) is of the opinion that "Conflict Resolution connotes a sense of finality, where the parties to a conflict are mutually

> satisfied with the outcome of a settlement and the conflict is resolved in a true sense of it. Some conflicts especially those over resources are not easily and permanently resolvable"

In cases of actual conflict resolution, the interest of parties to the conflict are negotiated; bearing in mind the basic needs of parties and respecting the identities and values, unique to each party while adopting all peaceful means possible (Adams and Timothy, 2009). Conflict resolution in the form of third-party intervention is of antique origin. In fact, its practice is as old as conflict resolution in human society. Goldskein and Perehouse (2007) have observed that perhaps, the practice of third-party involvement in conflict resolution between feuding parties is one of the earliest forms of pacific settlement of dispute strategy in primitive society. This practice involves; highly respected individuals, myths, and logical resolution processes among different groups. Take for instance, among the Igbo-South East, Nigeria, Eboh (1997) has observed that traditional conflict resolution practice is imbued or influenced by; and strongly leans on the Igbo myth, logic, their general belief system in the various gods and the nature and subject matter of such dispute.

In the world presently, there are many competitive issues, among them are the pursuit of power and wealth, unequal distribution of valued natural resources and environmental differences, unrest as a result of unmet and/or frustrated desire for security, dependence and autonomy issues, divergent and opposing views expressed in action or verbally which often results in some conflict and open clashes as a consequence of failed or inadequate diplomacy. In all these scenarios, however, conflict can be constructive or destructive. Among several conflict resolution models, is adopting the interest-based or power-based approaches following a dual line of litigation (legal action) and negotiation (diplomacy and peaceful settlement) simultaneously to reconcile parties to the conflict based on their interests. This usually comes at the end of hostility.

Benefits of Conflicts Resolution
Among other benefits of conflict resolution include as follows;
It leads to the building of relationships. In the church as well as organizations personal and professional staff will work together to enhance high productivity and efficiency.

Furthermore, conflict resolution can generate new insights. For example, if all agreed all the time to meet in the church by 10 a.m., there would be no reason to begin to consider different perspectives or engage in looking for better ways to handle situations. Again, it teaches people how to be patient and creates active listening. It also creates open communication and teaches humans how to be assertive.

Conclusion

Conflict may sometimes be seen as a situation where no latent conflict exists. Indeed, conflict could be present even when none of the participants acknowledges it to be there. It is found that, conflict resolution helps deal with stress which has been known over the years as a silent killer.

The church or any other organisation reproduces a small organisation which brings diverse people with diverse views together. Consequently, there are bound to be conflicts. Therefore, a church setting engages a range of people who are said to be neutral without knowing it. It is imperative to engage in negotiations who resolve the issue. In this case, once a conflict is resolved, the parties concerned will have to accept the outcome. Otherwise, conflict is said not to be resolved. Conflicts of different

ages have always been celebrated in the absence of conflicts.

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