Analysis of the theories about the causes of conflict

Business, Human Resources

Conflict theory has been used to provide a wide scope of social phenomena inclusive of wars and forcible overthrow of governments, abundance of money and state of being extremely poor, discrimination and behaviors involving physical force with intent to hurt, damage or kill. It attributes most to the fundamental growth of human society, for example democracy and civil rights to capitalistic efforts, to command the masses contrary to the desire of social life. It repeatedly considers on every aspect ideas of social inequality in the division of materials and interests itself in serious disagreements that are found across masses. A system of ideas advocated by Karl Max (1818- 1883), assert that a distinct group of people in a nation is in never ending disagreement by reason of competing for restricted resources. It holds that the way people or masses relate to each other is maintained through domination and the capacity to do something, as opposed to general agreements and conformity. In proportion to conflict theory, those with an abundance of valuable possessions and power, attempt to hold on to it by any means possible, mainly by forcibly putting an end the poor and powerless. The word conflict has a lot of meanings in everyday life. Without detail it comprises of, ongoing exchange of views about a subject, arguing the validity of the subject, difference in opinion and vigorous attempts to keep someone from acquiring what he desires to secure. Many reasons are behind the origin of conflict in our society. A lot of theoreticians have expressed their views on the origin of the word. At different levels, conflict is believed to be an inclination to fulfil two or more incompatible responses at the same time. The incompatible action may originate within individuals or between two or more individuals or within a number of people.

Roderick, (1999), asserts incompatibility is a state of mutual active opposition or hostility between two or more parties.

Conflict theory in sociology attempts to provide more details why people think and act the way they do. It is one in the middle of many sociological theories that seek to hypothesize and assess conflict, social order, inefficient and efficiency. It is also a theory of power, use of power and being legitimate. In many instances, it is helpful to approach conflict by evaluating the nature of the topic at stake. The aim of this assignment is to discuss given theories about the causes of conflict and give examples for each of them from the world over.

One theory which looks at the roots of conflict is Human Needs Theory (HTN), put forward by Australian professor, John Burton (1696-1771) and American psychologist Abraham Maslow, (1908-1970). Human needs theory propose that everyone has specific but not explicitly stated basic universal needs and when these are not met, conflict is certainly going to take place. Abraham developed a hierarchy of needs beginning with food, water, and shelter, followed by the need of being safe and state of feeling secure, then a sense of belonging or love, self-esteem and further personal fulfillment and self-actualization. As stated by John Burton and Abraham Maslow, basic needs stimulate the interest of people to take action when there needs are unmet and as a consequence, this can be a cause of conflict, as people will use their power to satisfy these needs. The longer the needs go unmet the stronger the urge. So the longer one goes without food, for example, the greater the hunger and the urge to seek food.

The assumption to the Human Needs Theory is that, the damaging lack of material benefits of human beings and the social systems' opportunities of meeting their expectations of economic resources, safety, fact of being who or what a person is, is behind all violent conflicts. The concept of basic human needs stems from our biological phenomena, mental, physical, social, spiritual and physiological needs of which without them, human existence is impossible. Physiological needs are inevitable to maintain life: oxygen, food and water and are needed by all as they are the principle focus of life. When an individuals' physiological needs are not met, they typically change to safety needs, which may comprise health, freedom from war and financial security. If safety and physiological needs are not met, a person will focus on the need on society and love, met by family, allies and partners. A human being works to accomplish respect and admiration once needs for love and a sense of belonging are met. Self-confidence and acceptance of others are significant elements of this need. Respect and admiration is necessary for self-actualization, which is the skill to one's true potential. However, necessary components differ from person to person. Absence of self-respect and admiration or the inability to self-actualize, may also bring about severe despondency and dejection, especially when it is long lasting and causes excessive uneasiness. The argument by human needs theory is that, peoples unyielding force to meet their unmet needs on individual, group and societal level, is one of the primary causes of longer than expected or stubborn conflicts, Huitt, (2007). For example, the Israeli – Palestine conflict comprise the unmet needs of identity and security. Too many to be counted Palestinians feel that their hereditary right to identity is being denied of them

both personally and nationally. Israelis on the other hand feel they have no security individually because of suicide bombings and naturally as a reason to that, their state is not recognized by majority of their neighbor's; and culturally because anti-Semitism is growing worldwide. Israeli and Palestine unmet needs directly and deeply affect all other issues connected with the current conflict. As a result, if a resolution is to found, the needs of Palestinian identity and Israelis security must be addressed and meet the expectations and needs on all levels.

Karl Max (1881-1883), is said to be the father of Relational theory also known as social conflict theory, which regard social life as a contest in which people compete for materials, capacity to influence and inequality. Relational conflict theory is a macro-oriented pattern in sociology that looks at society as an arena of inequality that causes conflict and social change. Key aspects in this perspective are that, society is arranged in a manner to benefit a few at the expense of the majority. Karl Max was certain that human beings are fundamentally productive. To survive, people have to produce. In addition, he believed that people have two relationships to the means of production: It is ether you own the productive property or you work for the person who does. To a social or relational conflict theorist, it is all about the powerful groups against the minority group relations, Harambos, (1995). The theory argues that individuals and groups (social classes) inside society interact on the basis of conflict as opposed to general agreement, to which powerful groups habitually use their power to continue to have it and exploit the powerless. It recognizes that, the modern society, criminal justice

system and criminal law, functions as a representative of the rich and a group of people considered to be superior in the society, with resulting policies aimed at controlling the poor, so cause to control organized schemes in which the upper class keep power completely and other classes continue to be economically disadvantaged, deprived of the right to vote and almost left without physical strength.

Karl Max predicted such conflicts, asserting that, " every society is based on active hostility of oppressing and oppressed classes". With wealth comes power and the those having a great deal of money have power to bring into existence or completely get rid of conflict. Relational conflict theory can be used for good and bad. An example would the rebellion in resistance to the government in Somalia, in which the populace has been fighting their government for equality and fairness. The government on the other hand is fighting its own people to keep the control of power. Correspondingly, relational conflict theory is on the subject of those in power wishing to remain in power and those not in power wanting to gain power. Regrettably, the innocent by-standers are the ones getting hurt or killed. This is not just restricted to Somalia; it is across the globe. Those are in power want more power and wealth to control those that are less fortunate.

The word politics comes from the Greek word " polis" to refer " aty-state", considered to be centers of ideas and social behavior of a particular group of people and advanced system of human social development where people interact under a unified government. The ancestry of the word, consequently, suggest that politics is a word that takes hold of human

activities happening within the state. As it is applied now, it indicates everything that takes place in the state as well as among states. According to Thomas, (1988), politics denotes social activity, a science through which people collectively put structures, determination and purpose in their actions for their lives. For that reason, it does not come into existence from the activities of a single person but from that of many. It is about conflict and cooperation caused by the diversity among people, who disagree in the way they regard things and have different opinions in nearly every conceivable aspect of life. On the other hand, cooperation stimulates the interest of men's shared goal of bringing about a happy life. The process of dealing with conflict to accomplish order and after that maintain that order is politics. In other words, politics is absolutely conflict resolution, Thomas, (1988). Because everyone has diverse interests, politics is conducive to conflict and when politicians act in the way they see best for their country, other people in the country have different views, as a result conflict arise. At its core, conflict is the means we resolve conflicts, which is healthy, the problem is if there is no progress to towards resolving conflict. The political conflict theory assumes that conflict is a result of: failed or weak state, absence of regime legitimacy and poor governance. One of the definitions of governance is initiating policies and an ongoing monitoring of their proper implementation by the members of a governing body of a country. However, rules are there, but politicians nullify their implementation, World Bank, (1994). Examples of poor governance are basically, any government that puts their own interests before the ones for their people. In many countries, poor governance has led poor economic growth, apparent through corruption, ineffective rule of law

and political instability. An election that is not, free, credible and fair is one of the causes of conflict among many, in any state. Libya has been politically unstable since 2011, when a successful rebellion against Muammar Gadhafi's longstanding authoritarian government left a power vacuum. A transitional government was elected in 2012, it promptly became dysfunctional. To provide a substitute to it, the North African country held an election in 2014 but this led to the creation of competing governments, each backed by powerful alliances of rebel forces.

Transformative approach to conflict intervention was proposed by Robert, A, Baruch, B and Joseph, P. F in 1994 and has been seen the subject of much study, research and development ever since. It is an approach to conflict that allocates fundamental truths of empowerment and recognition at the core of assisting people in conflict change how they relate with each other. In place of viewing conflict as a short term set of circumstances in need of a solution, transformative conflict theory accepts as true, without proof that, conflict is a long term process with many opportunities for intervention and transformation. The theory has its roots in both conflict theory and social constructionism, an approach meant to increase our ability to comprehend how social structure restricts the lives of people in the lower rank class. It takes an essentially communicative attitude of human conflict. In proportion to this theory, conflict amounts to first and foremost, a crisis in some human interaction, an interactional crisis having a somewhat similar and predictable character. Purposefully, the existence of conflict tends to upset the stability of the parties' experience of both self and the other, so that the parties

interact in ways that are both more vulnerable and absorbed than they did before the conflict. For most people, according to transformative conflict theory, being caught in destructive interaction is the most negative impact of conflict. However, the transformative model argues that, in spite conflicts potential to cause destruction in the way people interact, people have capacity to change they interact to embody personal strength and self-confidence (the empowerment shift) and the relative responsiveness (recognition shift). The theory believes that transformation of the interaction itself, is what matters most to parties in conflict, even more than settlement. For that reason, the theory describes the mediators goal in helping the parties identify opportunities for empowerment and recognition shifts, they interact to choose whether to act upon the opportunities and thus change from destructive to constructive interaction, Bush, (2004). In transformative conflict theory, accomplishment is not measured by settlement in itself but by the parties' direction in the way of strength, interpersonal responsiveness and constructive interaction. The outcomes are solely in the parties own hands and prone to their own choices. The phenomena of transformative framework are based on and represents relational systems of ideas and ideals. Human beings are taken to be fundamentally social- formed in and through their relations with other human beings. According to Bush, (2002), transformative conflict theory avoids the problem of mediators' directedness, which frequently takes place in problem solving intervention, instead it puts the responsibility for all outcomes squarely on the disputants. It should be well known as well that, empowerment and recognition is evaluated independently of any specific outcome in the process to reach an

agreement or reconciliation. Conflict transformation is possible since conflict is unavoidable in society.

Statistics of conflict and wars are displeasing that they raise a question that everyone ought to ask: are such levels of suffering, done by human beings on each other, in actual fact necessary? Are there no better ways of managing and resolving the differences between people and groups of people, concerning war and violent conflict? Although conflict is a characteristic of human existence and part of the dynamics of life, to drive us into the future, it can be managed positively. At any time that, it is associated with violence, destruction and killing, it is no longer a healthy part of living because it solves few problems, creates many and breeds unhealthier conflicts.