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**TRANSACTIONAL ANALYSIS’ APPLICATIONS
FOR INTERPERSONNEL CONFLICTS MANAGEMENT
AT THE ORGANISATION LEVEL**

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Abstract: Interpersonal conflict relates to disagreements, differences, or incompatibilities between an individual and his or her superior(s), subordinates, or peers. The Transactional Analysis helps us to conceptualize some of the dilemmas that are present in an interpersonal conflict. The process and structural interventions for the management of interpersonal conflict are also in this study Transactional Analysis.

Key words: Transactional Analysis, Management of Interpersonal Conflicts at the Organization Level, Ego States, Critical and Nurturing Parents.

1. Introduction

Organizations are constantly changing in order to improve their competitive position, but this does not mean that our organizations are learning to manage conflict more effectively. The scope of this study is to make a scientific link between Transactional Analysis applications and the management of interpersonal conflict at organizational level, enabling the members of an organization to improve their communication skills and consequently the styles of handling conflict with superiors, subordinates, and peers.

2. Conflicts

2.1. Some definitions of conflict

Conflict is inevitable among humans. When two or more social entities (e.g. individuals, groups, organizations, and nations) come in contact with one another in attaining their objectives, their relationships may become incompatible or inconsistent. Relationships among such entities may become inconsistent when two or more of them desire a similar resource that is in short supply; when they have partially exclusive behavioral preferences regarding their joint action; or when they have different attitudes, values, beliefs, and skills. Conflict is the perception of differences of interests among people.

Another definition of conflict would be a process of social interaction involving a struggle over claims to resources, power and status, beliefs, and other preferences and desires. The aims of the parties in conflict may extend from simply attempting to gain acceptance of a preference, or securing a resource advantage, to the extremes of injuring or eliminating opponents.

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2.2. Contributions from various disciplines

John Dewey being among the philosophers who made significant contributions to the study of social conflict during the twentieth century observed that when the relationship between human beings and environment is interrupted by obstacles or conflict, individuals must use their intelligence to readapt through a change in their accustomed modes of conduct and belief. In other words, an individual should examine a conflict situation to discover the various actions possible and choose the one that is most effective.

The Biological Scientist Charles Darwin believed that the growth of human beings is a function of their response to conflict with the environment. If conflict were altogether absent, as appears to be the ideal in much of classical philosophy, the progress of human beings would be retarded. The evolutionary emphasis on the essential role of conflict in human development is a pennant of the nineteenth century. Through Darwin, it found its way into virtually all facets of science.

Georg Simmel being among the classical sociologists who made a significant contribution to the study of the various forms of conflict, has led to the general idea, namely the assumption that a certain amount of conflict is as essential to the proper functioning of groups, as stability and order. Also, for small groups such as the marital couple he think that, a certain amount of discord, inner divergence and outer controversy, is organically tied up with very elements that ultimately hold the group together and it cannot be separated from the unity of the sociological structure.

American sociologists Park and Burgess (1921/1929) assert that only where there is conflict is behavior conscious and self-conscious, only here are the conditions for rational conduct.

Elton Mayo (1933) emphasized in his studies the need for cooperation for enhancing organizational effectiveness. To him, conflict was an evil and should be minimized or, if possible, eliminated from organizations altogether.

Talcott Parsons' (1949) theory is based on the hypothesis that society is inherently stable, integrated, and functional, and, as a result, conflict is viewed to be abnormal and dysfunctional. His model is through and through an equilibrium model and the dynamics of conflict are relegated to the level of 'deviation.

During the 1950s a number of theorists presented viewpoints opposing Parsons' analysis. Consequently, the interest in the study of the social phenomena of conflict began to grow. The publication of *The Functions of Social Conflict* by Lewis Coser (1956), which focused on the productive potential of conflict, reminded the key role that conflict always plays for society.

Later (1969-1999), two opposing viewpoints were presented as the functional and dysfunctional outcomes of conflict in organizations (as well as productive and destructive potential), as follows:

- Functional Outcomes of conflict in organizations may cause:
 - Stimulation of innovation, creativity, and growth;
 - Improvement of organizational decision making;
 - Finding alternative solutions to a problem;
 - Finding synergistic solutions to common problems;
 - Enhancement of individual and group performance;
 - Identification of the new approaches;
 - For members to articulate and clarify the positions / opinions.
- Dysfunctional Outcomes of conflict in organizations may cause:

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- Job stress, burnout, and dissatisfaction;
- The decreasing of communication between groups and individuals;
- The distrust and suspicion climate;
- Damaged relationships;
- The reduction of job performance;
- The resistance for changes;
- The reduction of organizational loyalty and commitment.

That lead us to the idea that social conflict has both positive and negative consequences. If a social system would benefit from conflict, the negative effects of conflict should be reduced and positive effects should be enhanced.

3. Organizational Conflict

Having in mind that conflict is an important social concept, we can then continue to find out what is happened in the special case of organizational conflict. It was identified that the conflict is one of the major organizational phenomena.

Lois R. Pondy (1967) noticed that organization theories that do not admit conflict provide poor guidance in dealing with problems of organizational efficiency, stability, governance, and change, for conflict within and between organizations is intimately related as either symptom, cause, or effect, to each of these problems. According to Pondy there are identified three types of conflict among the subunits of formal organizations:

- (1) Bargaining conflict among the interest-group;
- (2) Bureaucratic conflict into the frame of superior-subordinate relationship;
- (3) Systems conflict to an horizontal / working relationship.

The question is how the organization members resolve the conflict: by withdrawing from organization, by altering the existing set of relationship or by changing their values and behavior within the context of existing relationships?

Baron, R.A (1990) noticed that the organizational conflict is among other important topics for scientists and managers who try to understand the nature of organizational process and behavior.

4. The Classical View of Organizational Conflict

Frederick Taylor (1911) and his partners believed that the good functioning of an organization should be improved if the principles of scientific management were implemented. Some of these principles involved the following:

- (1) The development of a true science of work that involves determining a fair day's work;
- (2) Scientific selection and progressive development of workers;
- (3) Fitting of workers to their respective tasks;
- (4) Constant and intimate cooperation of managers and workers;
- (5) Encouraging each person to the utmost utilization of members capacity and, when is the case, provision of means for that;
- (6) The control of the various phases of production by the specialized organization structures.

Taylor particularly underlined that the conflicts labor - management would be reduce and/or disappear if these principles were applied. Although scientific management led to significant advancement in industrial efficiency, it was not without opposition. During the later part of his life, Taylor was subjected to much criticism by labor. The

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opposition from organized labor was due to their belief that scientific management resulted in speedup of the workers. The unions also objected to the scientific determination of wages without resorting to collective bargaining. Scientific management also did not make any provision for the effective management of conflict between individuals and groups in an organization.

5. Transactional Analysis

5.1. Ego States in Transactional Analysis (TA)

Structural model of TA, developed by Eric Berne (1961-1964), is also known as the PAC (Parent, Adult and Child) model.

Parent (P) is Taught, Adult (A) is Thought and the Child(C) is Felt. The theory tells us that a healthy personality will through the day access all of these Ego States.

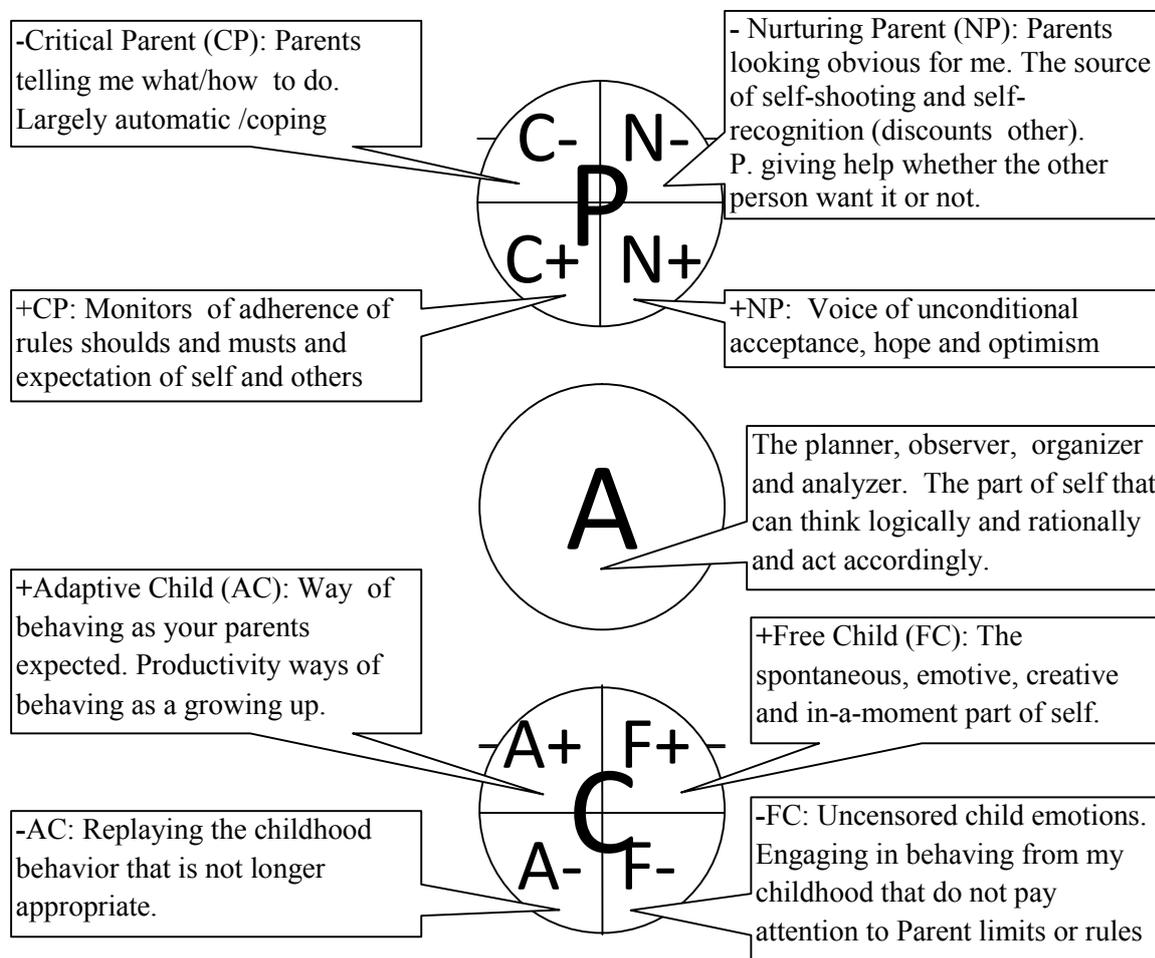


Fig.1 EGO states in Transactional Analysis -TA

Development of A Ego States depends on who and what we transact with and C Ego States is always asking for a loving response.

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5.2. Complementary Transactions

As we can see in Fig. 2, Lucy is coming from a Critical Parent (CP) Ego State and Tom's response is coming from Adaptive Child (AC). Basically this could be happened forever as long the parties are happy in this position.

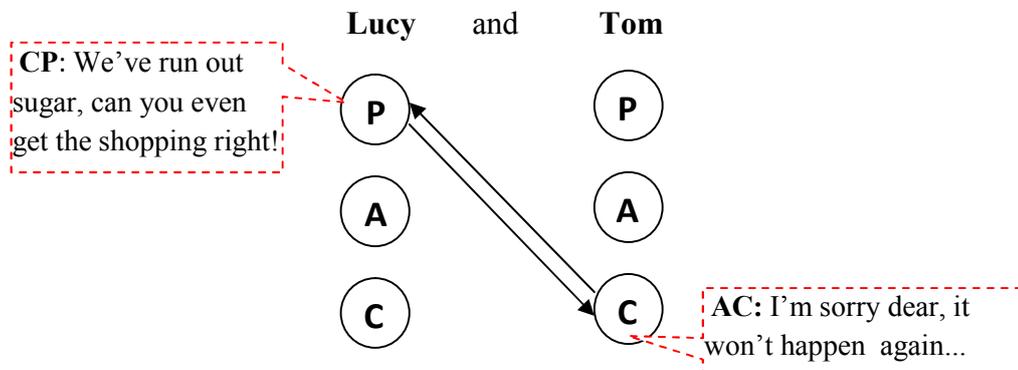


Fig. 2 Example of Complementary Transactions

So that transactions could last forever, less in the case Lucy consider that Tom do not want to take the responsibility and decides to move over the life with someone else or Tom, possible, get fed up considering Lucy always been demanding and he moves on with his life.

5.3. Crossed Transactions

David and Mohammed are colleagues at work. As we can see (Fig. 3), David is asking about a report talking to Mohammed Child (C) Ego State. That is coming from a Parental (P) position and talking to the child are talking down like it is a child but the Mohammed reaction is from a Parental (P) position as well and he says to David „*Who do you think you are talking to? Apologies...*“.

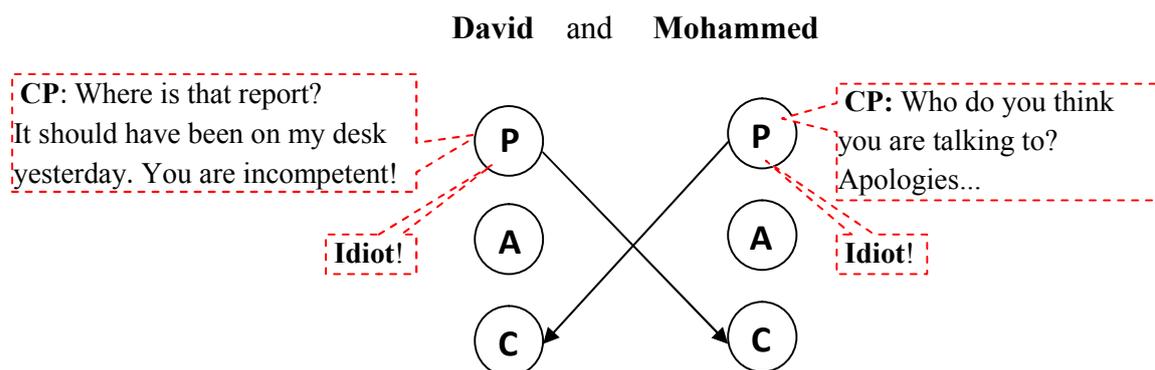


Fig. 3 Example of Crossed Transactions

Mohammad is talking to David Child Ego State. Crossed transaction is not going to last very long. It will be very brief dialogue and the reason for that is there is no position to take consequently with all the literal storm. That is the exactly what they do here both going to the different direction with clear idea of the other person.

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5.4. Complementary Adult Transactions

Alicia and Valerie are neighbors. The conversation between them brings out a very Adult Ego State. It could go on forever. The people are respectful and thoughtful, being a very mature relationship which can transform into a very good friendship.

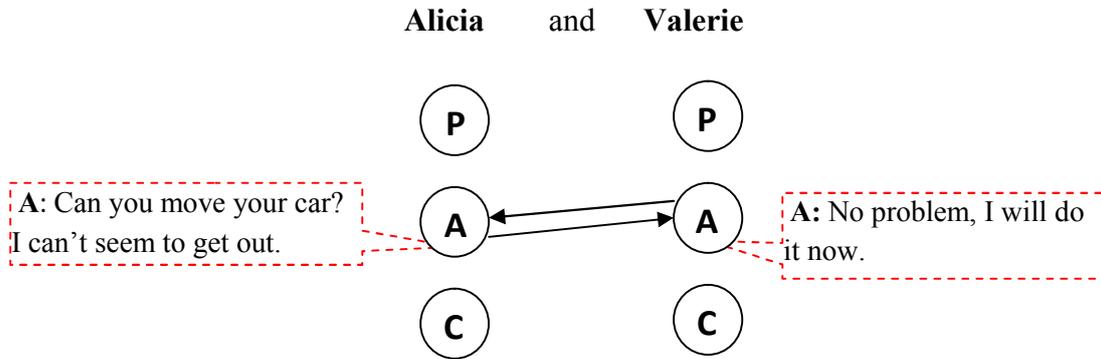


Fig. 4 Example for Complementary Adult Transactions

5.5. Ulterior Transaction

Peter is buying a car and find Veronica as car sales person. Their conversation lacks like an Adult Transaction. It is very professional, very respectful, very informative (it is information) there is not judgment of the child attitude involved but, when Veronica said „It is very, very fast“, she address to Peter Free Child Ego States. Peter, thinking to what Veronica said, drop from the Adult into the Free Child Ego State and responds positives.

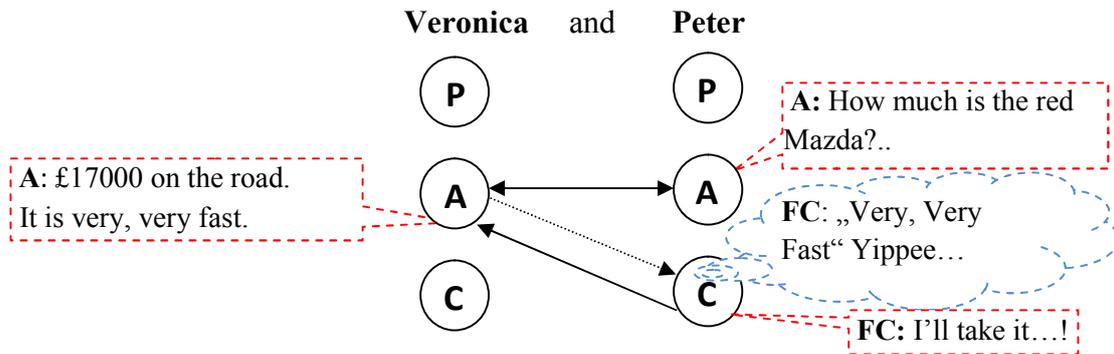


Fig. 5 Example for Ulterior Transactions

So, it is very interesting how Veronica link somehow the product characteristics with Peter Free Child Ego State. This is a good example for salespersons to find out something in (e.g. the cost of) what they sell which appeals to the Child Ego State. This type of salesmen will have certainly a good productivity.

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6. Conclusions / Interpersonal Conflict Management and Transactional Analysis

Transactional Analysis (TA) provides better understanding of social transactions that involve interactions between two individuals and could be considered as a psychiatric tool providing a model for:

- controlling our own behavior;
- better understanding and influencing the behavior of others.

A TA intervention can enable the members of an organization to improve their communication skills and consequently the styles of handling conflict with superiors, subordinates, and peers.

As was mention above in Fig.1, Adult Ego State represents the rational part of human personality. It is based on reason, collecting and processing information for problem solving, and discussion on the basis of evidence and information. It assumes that human beings are equal, important, and reasonable but, the development of this (Adult Ego State) depends on who and what we transact with.

Also the examples given above lead to the conclusion that at the Organization Level, Adult – Adult transaction is the most desirable being reasonably effective, obtaining the best results for the individual and the organization.

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