**Causes of Conflict**

Conflict is inevitable and it keeps occurring in every individual life, either at home, work, social outings or even when we sleep in our bedroom without interacting with anyone. Although, we are familiar with those inexhaustible things that cause conflicts, but in this context, they can be categorised into four namely:

• Conflicts over resources

• Conflicts over psychological needs

• Conflicts involving values

• Conflicts over inadequate information

**Conflicts over Resources**: These types of conflicts are usually easy to identify because they can be seen and are more potentially easy to resolve. This conflict occurs when two or more people are competing for inadequate (or perceived to be inadequate) resources over a period of time. The competition may assume negative or destructive dimension when the available resources are not evenly and judiciously distributed. The relatively deprived would always struggle to improve their lot. This view agrees with the Marxian theory of conflict, which posits that the more the rate of unequal distribution of scarce resources in the society, the greater is the basic conflict of interest between its dominant and subordinate segments. He also says that when practices of dominant segment create “alienation dispositions” the more the subordinate segments of a system become aware of their collective interests and question the distribution of scarce resources, the more likely they are to join in overt conflict against dominant segment of a system. Resources that cause conflict include landed properties, money, vehicles, and company ownership/shares among others.

**Conflict over Psychological Needs**: Conflicts over psychological needs of groups and individuals are conflicts which cannot be seen but affect the psyche of the individual and group self-actualisation, need for individual and group respect, attempt to project one’s group to be better than the others. With particular reference to Maslow’s theory, he points out that when an individual psychological need is achieved or satisfied, such an individual becomes dominated by a drive for the other unsatisfied needs through a process he calls “Fulfillment Progression”. Example includes structural factor, politics, personality clash, and ethnicity.

**Conflict Involving Values**: Contradicting value systems such as religious beliefs, ideological positions, and general worldview is another factor responsible for social conflict among the interacting parties. Conflict involving values are the most difficult to understand and resolve because most times people could die for what they believe in. According to Weaver, who likens culture to an iceberg, he says “internal culture”, is implicitly learnt and difficult to change. That is part of culture that is below the waterline in the iceberg analogy. It includes some of our beliefs, our values and thought patterns, attitudes, non-verbal communication and perception. Beliefs are interrelated and form “belief system”, which because they are learnt in life, are difficult to change. Examples of values laden conflicts include the Cold War, terrorism (suicide bombing), religious conflicts such as 1980 Maitatsine crisis, the 1991 Bonnke crisis in Kano, the 2002 Beauty Pageant crisis. Others include the September 30, 2005 Cartoon crisis over a Danish newspaper, Jyllands Posten, published cartoons caricaturing Prophet Mohammad, the most recent of all the religious crisis in Nigeria is the Boko Haram crisis that has killed an estimated 3,500 people.

**Conflict over inadequate Information**: The last but not the least of the factors causing conflict in any society is “manipulation of information”. The pivotal role of information in societal conflict cannot be over-emphasised, they can either be manipulative or constructive. Especially in a widespread conflict situation, the role of information becomes more crucial, difficult and dangerous. When the information system in a society is tampered with, there is bound to be conflict. The information system can be tampered with in different ways. This can be either by feeding people with lies or giving the right information at the wrong time. In our contemporary societies, the quantity and quality of information vary dramatically and are dependent on wide range of factors, from level of literacy to social cohesiveness and stability to available technology. Central to the availability and quality of public information is the media (print, audio and audio-visual). Also, in deeply divided societies, the media can also shape opinion and decisions related to the nature and scope of conflicts, as well as the potential alternatives to conflict, where social, political and economic conflict have degenerated into widespread violence, the role of information in mitigating the effects of violence or in presenting alternatives can be crucial. Because communication is an integral part of conflict, it comes as no surprise that those participating in organised violence often use the media to attack opponents, and “spread disinformation or misinformation” and “rally external and internal support.” Some of the communication barriers that are capable of distorting meanings are physical distance, language, and the listeners value judgement.

**Types of Conflict**

It is important that we know types of conflict we encounter in our day-to -day activities. There are numerous kinds of conflicts but we will limit ourselves to the following:

a. Intra-Personal Conflict: This type of conflict occurs within an individual. Examples of such are use of time, choice of partner, moral questions, goals and aspirations.

b. Inter-Personal Conflict: This refers to conflict between two or more individuals over an issue.

c. Intra-Group Conflict: This refers to conflict between individuals, or faction within a group.

d. Inter-Group Conflict: This refers to conflict between groups such as club, class versus class, family versus family.

e. National Conflict: This refers to conflicts within a nation, involving different groups within the nation. This could be interethnic, inter-religious, or competition for resources.

f. International Conflict: This refers to conflicts between nations. This could be for ideological reasons, territorial claims, and political competition.

**Classification of Conflict**

Ted Robert Gurr, in his article “A Comparative of Civil Strife” and Quincy Wright in his paper “The Nature of Conflict” rightly argue that the level of violence rather than its absence or presence is a better criterion for classifying conflicts. Wright for instance distinguishes between “ordinary” conflict which involves small-scale violence usually at the individual and group levels and war, which is carried out by armed forces and involves violence of considerable magnitude.

Similarly, Gurr distinguishes between “turmoil,” which includes both non-violent and small-scale violent conflict and rebellion or internal war. The point in this latter classification is that notwithstanding their peculiarities, conflicts differ largely in degree rather than kind and should therefore be analysed in terms of continuum which has nonviolent conflict at one end and violent ones at the other. This enables us to pay close attention to the possible escalation or worsening of conflicts, sometimes a simple non-violent/violent classification appears to shape the other.

Another popular classification categorises conflict into structural and non-structural conflicts. Structural conflicts which tend to be endemic are those which are predisposed by the innate character of the polity. Typically, they result from “unjust repressive and oppressive sociopolitical structure”. Structural factors also include inequality among groups in obtaining access to socioeconomic and political privileges and benefits such as education, income distribution, unemployment, and control of political power, as well as low levels of national integration which encourage “zero-sum” context for state power. Defined in such terms, Wherp, in his work “Conflict Resolution” opines that most conflicts in Africa are endemic by definition to the extent that the predisposing factors are not embedded in the political system. They result from specific policies or actions by the state or groups and do not generally last for too long. The third classification of conflicts is based on the character of the parties in conflicts. Thus, ethnic and religious conflicts (which are most prevalent in Africa) tend to be the most important bases of identity for most individuals and as such attract strong loyalties to the groups involved.