HRM 2302: Personal and Social Responsibility

Module 4  Solution of Student Conflicts

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Module Objectives
After completing this module successfully, the student will be able to:
1. understand student conflicts and its negative consequences.
2. behave as a person who will not be a cause of any student conflict.
3. develop and enhance skills in solution of student conflicts.

Meaning of Student Conflicts
A conflict of students may be a serious disagreement about something important or a fight or a straggle involving students. In this context student conflicts which hamper proper education and threaten peace are taken into consideration. Hence student conflicts need to be settled.

Levels
Student conflicts may occur at different levels. A conflict may occur within one student. That is called Intrapersonal Conflict. Also a conflict may occur between two students. That conflict is called Interpersonal Conflict. A conflict may occur among three or more students within a group. That refers to an Intragroup Conflict. A conflict that occurs between two or more student groups can be called Intergroup Conflict. All dysfunctional conflicts are to be avoided.

Importance of Conflict Solution
Conflicts will result in many negative consequences. Academic peace is lost. Academic unrest prevails. There are short-term bad repercussions as well as long-term repercussions.

Two Approaches
There are two approaches for management of student conflicts. They are preventive and corrective. Preventive approach involves actions taken to prevent conflicts before they occur. Corrective approach involves actions taken to handle conflicts, which have already occurred. Prevention is better than correction as it consumes lesser resources and zero or lesser negatives.

Activity 1 False Signing
After finishing the lecture, the lecturer examined the attendance sheet. He found that the number of students present is less than the number of students signed (in one signature). He inquired about this from the class. Everybody was silent. The lecturer did calling names and checking the presences. Then he found out that Nimal had been absent but someone had signed on behalf of him. He stressed:
“Who signed on behalf of Nimal? Tell me. If you tell me I will not punish. If the person who signed does not stand, the whole class will be punished”
Then, one student namely Kamal stood up and said “Sir, I saw Sunil signing”
In fact Sunil did not sign. Sunil stood up and said “Sir, No. I did not sign. He told a lie.”
The lecturer, any way, warned Sunil and left.
Problem: If you are Sunil, how do you solve this conflict with Kamal?
Role Play: Five students assume the role of Sunil and act. Others seriously watch.

Questions for Discussion
1. Analyze how the five students talked to Kamal (styles).
2. What are the ways that aggravate the conflict?
3. If the conflict gets aggravated what may be the consequences?
4. Is there a style that leads to solve the conflict? If yes, why? If not, what and why?
5. What may be a better way so as to solve the conflict?
6. If Kamal is a good student how should he behave after this?
7. What did you learn from this activity?

Activity 2: Ragging
Ragging has been a major source of student conflict in Sri Lankan universities.
Brian Storming: All the students should participate in.
Questions for Discussion
1. Explain how Ragging results in student conflicts.
2. Why do some students do Ragging?
3. Why are some students not engaged in Ragging?
4. How can we reduce and eradicate Ragging?

Activity 3: Nicknames
1. What are the common nicknames that students use?
2. What do you feel with regard to these nicknames?
3. If someone makes jokes by using a nickname or nicknames to you, how do you feel?
5. Why do some students fabricate nicknames to others?
6. How can we stop or reduce this malpractice?

Activity 4: Sabotage
Form five or seven groups each consisting of three students. These three students of each group are named as A, B, and C. Persons namely A and B are good friends. C is the saboteur. A and B get together and talk about each other. C comes and intervenes with the intention of sabotage.

Perform Role Plays.

Questions addressed to those who played the role of C (saboteur):
1. What did you think and feel when working as a saboteur?
2. What is Sabotage? Why?
3. What strategies did you use for sabotage?

Questions addressed to those who played the roles of A and B (friends):
1. What thoughts and feelings did you experience when facing the sabotage?
2. Did you take any attempt to save from the sabotage?
3. What is that? Or what are they?

Questions addressed to the whole class:
1. What are the occasions where we may face sabotages?
2. How do we identify sabotages?
3. How can we avoid sabotages?
(Source: adapted from Balasuriya, 2002)

Activity 5: Read the following four incidents and try to study better ways of solving conflicts through Role Playing and Brain Storming.

1. You are listening to a lecture. The attendance sheet is handed over to you by the student who is sitting left to you. When you start to sign you note that someone has deleted your name by a line and instead written a nickname ‘Donkey’.

2. You are in the queue for the dinner at the canteen of the AB hostel. There are ten students including you in the queue (five after you and four before you). Suddenly one student appears and directly goes to buy the dinner (without being in the queue).

3. Assume that you are a female student who is pleasant. You observe that one male student is interested in you. One day in the morning, on the way to lecture hall for a scheduled lecture he comes and tells you ‘Sister, I like you. Do you like me?’

4. You go to the Reading Room of the library. You notice that there are a large number of students who are waiting for the opening of the room. After 5 minutes, the door is opened, many students rush to enter the room in order to get a place. They get squeezed heavily and enter making a big noise. You wait until the rush is over. After entering you start searching a place. You see one seat not being occupied. You go there and sit on the chair. Suddenly you hear ‘No. it is reserved for my girl friend.’ You stand up and see another empty chair. When you are about to sit, the other person of the desk tells ‘There is one for this.’

5. Nimal works for a political party as a student leader while reading for a Degree in the university. He wants to get the power of the student council. Another leader namely Kamal appears to contest and who is working for another political party. A conflict occurs at the interpersonal level and it finally expands to the intergroup level. Conflicts result in killing of two students, physical hurting to many students, closing the university for several months, and deterioration of university goodwill.

Conflict Solution Behavioural Styles
After a conflict occurred, one can follow a style to handle the problem. There are four behavioural styles people follow when faced with a conflict (Balasuriya, 2002). They are serpent, barbarian, intellect, and wise person.

Serpent
The person behaves just like a serpent. A poisonous serpent (a snake, a python, or a viper) attacks the other and attempts to kill. Mostly attack results in killing the other. When faced with a conflict one may behave as a serpent and this is the lowest mental state. Human being becomes a beast or a poisonous animal. He/she behaves beastly. With instant anger the person reacts. Results are very disastrous; not acceptable at all; and deadly. Characteristics associated with this style are:
Attack to attack
Instant hitting
Poisonous brutalizing
Intention to kill
Very dangerous

**Barbarian**
A barbarian belongs to an uncivilized tribe. The person behaves very cruelly. He/she behaves in a bad manner and has no respect for human rights and virtues. He/she is a person of vices. This style is a low mental state and is not acceptable in a civilized society. With the intention of retaliation the person reacts. Results are disastrous; not acceptable; and counterproductive. Characteristics associated with this style are:

Defeating the other
Threatening
Retaliating
Not controlling emotions
Being violent
Being aggressive
Attempting to assault
Assaulting
Engaging in destructive actions collectively

**Intellect**
An intellect is a very intelligent person. He/she has the ability to understand and deal with ideas, opinions, interests etc. He/she uses rational decision making. The intellect has respect for human rights and virtues. This style is a high mental state and is definitely acceptable in a civilized society. With the intention of solving the conflict the person reacts. Results are positive; acceptable; and productive. Characteristics associated with this style are:

Attempt to understand the conflict
Listening to the other/s
Making a solution acceptable to all the parties involved in the conflict
Controlling emotions
Looking at the conflict fairly and without being prejudiced
Concern with the other
Building trust
Being flexible
Accepting the truth
Talking honestly and openly
Being patient
Being empathetic

**Wise Person**
A wise person is a person who uses his/her knowledge and experience in order to make sensible and reasonable decisions. He/she has the ability to understand the reality of self, others, life, nature, and world. Balasurity (2002, p. 124) writes (in Sinhala):
“Eradicating the conflict occurs through wisdom. Intelligence contributes to settle external conflicts while wisdom contributes to settle internal conflicts. Creating a real peaceful life is possible through awakening wisdom.”

There may be various conflicts in the mind of a person. Some of the conflicts are given below.
Indecision (uncertainty-I don’t know what to do, how to do, when to do etc.)
Doubt (feeling of uncertainty about something without knowing other things)
Dilemma (what to select? Do this or that? Difficult situation in which I have to choose between two or more alternatives)
Desire (I want this very much indeed)
Hostility (I want to destroy things that disturb to the desire)
Fear (whether something wrong/unpleasant, disadvantageous will happen to me?)
Inadequacy (this is not enough; I want more)
Impasse (it is impossible to act/decide/move)
Illusion (not seeing the truth; ignorance)
Confusion (I can’t organize due to so many things)

We are in suffering or conflicts due to one or two or several or all of the above mentioned mental conflicts. A person of wisdom will understand the above and endeavours to reduce or eradicate them. The wise person has genuine respect for human rights, humility and virtues. This style is the highest mental state and is definitely acceptable in a civilized society. With the intention of solving the conflict as well as preventing such conflicts in future the person reacts. Results are obviously positive. Characteristics associated with this style are:
Being prudent
Understanding self
Knowing how the mind works
Ascertaining the whole/totality
Ascertaining the nature of others subtly
Removing vices such as anger, hostility and jealousy

Reference