

A STUDY ON CONFLICT MANAGEMENT AMONG EXECUTIVES

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ABSTRACT

Conflict management is a new area in the field of HRM for having better understanding of one's own emotional state and of others. Conflict Management is the practice of identifying and handling conflict in a sensible, fair, and efficient manner. It is one of the important areas that have to be concentrated by the executives to understand the emotions, to relate better in relationships, achieve greater success at work and the ability to manage conflicts in a positive, trust building way to support the employers for organizational growth and benefits.

Managing conflicts requires skills such as effective communication, problem solving and negotiating with a focus on interests. Conflict occurs when two or more people oppose one another because their needs, wants, goals or values are being different. Conflict is almost always accompanied by feelings of anger, frustration, hurt, anxiety, or fear. The aim of the descriptive study is to understand the level of Conflict management by using various styles that exists among the executives in a reputed company. 63 executives were studied using a standardized tool developed by Rahim organizational conflict inventory. Overall score indicates that more than half of the respondents (52.4%) have high level of organizational conflict management.

KEYWORDS: Conflict Management, Emotions, Organization, Executives, Problem Solving

INTRODUCTION

Conflict management is a new area in the field of HRM for having better understanding of one's own emotional state and of others. Conflict Management is the practice of identifying and handling conflict in a sensible, fair, and efficient manner. It is one of the important areas that have to be concentrated by the executives to understand the emotions, to relate better in relationships, achieve greater success at work and the ability to manage conflicts in a positive, trust building way to support the employers for organizational growth and benefits. Managing conflicts requires skills such as effective communication, problem solving and negotiating with a focus on interests. Conflict occurs when two or more people oppose one another because their needs, wants, goals or values are being different. Conflict is almost always accompanied by feelings of anger, frustration, hurt, anxiety, or fear.

If an individual is perceived to manage conflict in an appropriate and effective manner within an organizational setting, that individual is also perceived to be more competent in general (Gross & Guerrero, 2000). Researchers in recent years have evaluated the basic assumptions underlying organizational conflict, questioning much of the existing body of conflict research (Jameson, 1999). Wilmont and Hocker (2001) states that conflict is "an expressed struggle between at least two interdependent parties who perceive incompatible goals, scarce resources and interference from others in achieving their goals" and conflict management styles refer to "patterned responses, or clusters of behavior, that people use in conflict" through diverse communication tactics. At the individual level, conflict begins "when one party perceives that

the other has negatively affected, or is about to negatively affect, something that he or she cares about" (Thomas, 1992). At the cultural level, conflicts occur between members of different cultures, and members of the same culture who feel that cultural rules or norms are being violated (Wilmot & Hocker, 2001). Although the definitions of conflict are different from one researcher to another and are dependent on situational variables, conflict can be generally defined as the interaction of interdependent people who perceive opposition of goals, aims and values, and who see the other party as potentially interfering with the realization of these goals (Putnam & Poole, 1987). The success of any organization is highly dependent on how it focuses, recruits, stimulates and keep its workforce. Today's organization need to be more flexible so that they are equipped to develop their work force and enjoy their commitment. Hence organizations should adopt a strategy to increase the conflict management for organizational objectives and employers needs.

The Five Conflict Management Styles

According to Thomas (1976) Organizations adopt different types of conflict management styles to resolve conflicts and it is important to note that each style has its pros and cons.

They are:

- Competing style of conflict management
- Avoiding style of conflict management
- Accommodating style of conflict management
- Compromising style of conflict management
- Collaborating style of conflict management

Conflict Assumption and Recent Changes

Perhaps definitions of conflict vary so much because attitudes toward conflict and images of conflict's role also vary widely. Hocker and Wilmot (1985) asked people to respond to the word "conflict" and were given the following responses: destruction, anger, disagreement, hostility, war, anxiety, tension, alienation, violence, competition, threat, heartache, pain, and hopelessness. Obviously, people viewed conflict as a concept which evoked negative images. Until the early 1960's, even scholars primarily portrayed conflict as an undesirable process to be avoided (Simons, 1972).

Blake and Mouton (1961) list eight activities that constitute conflict management:

i) Definition of the problem, ii) Review of the problem, iii) Development of the range of alternatives, iv) Debate of alternatives, v) Reaching of solutions, vi) Explanation and evaluation of solutions, vii) Weighing alternative solutions, viii) Selection of the appropriate solution. Human resources are heterogeneous; they consist of many different individuals each of whom has a unique personality.

A combination of different emotional responses to different stimuli and attitudes motivates and modes of thought in human being are widely different and complicated in the way they react to promises, praise and criticism. It is very difficult to predict their behavior especially in an organization where they work in groups. Human resource management is mainly concerned with the "people" dimension in management

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Jordan and Troth (2002) found that “the Conflict is something that is often closely tied with organizational change and as affirm, change is one element” that is reasonably constant in organizations. Like conflict, periods of change can be inherently emotional, triggering either positive emotions, such as excitement and enthusiasm, or negative emotions including anxiety and anger, which can be inherently disruptive to those involved in the change process (O’Neil & Lenn, 1995).

High levels of emotional intelligence assist an individual’s adaptability to change in facilitating openness to new ideas, receptivity, mobilization and learning. Thus, with high levels of emotional intelligence, individuals can make sense of and manage their own and others emotions as change occurs and therefore mediate any emotion-based interruptions to workplace activities that might occur. Hsi-Anshi; Ely Susanto(2010), done the study on “conflict management styles, emotional intelligence and job performance in public organizations”, the purpose of this paper is to investigate the relationships among emotional intelligence(EI) conflict management styles (cmss)and job performance at selected local governments in Indonesia. There are 228 respondents, he multiple hierarchal regressions were used to test the hypotheses.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Objectives of the Study

- To study the level of conflict management by using various styles that exists among the executives in the organization.
- To suggest measures to improve the conflict management strategies.

Research Design

The researcher adopted descriptive design to describe the various styles of conflict management that was used by the executives in the organization for the organizational growth and success.

Universe and Sampling

For the purpose of the study, the researcher has selected, one of India’s leading Private Sector Engineering Organizations located in southern part of India. The executives were chosen as the population for the research as suggested by the management of the organization. There were 63 respondents (managers-8 assistant Managers- 5, engineers – 20, assistant engineers- 21, supervisors -9) in the entire units, for the present research the researcher selected all the executives. Thus census method was adopted in this study.

Tools of Data Collection

A semi-structured questionnaire was prepared by the researcher to collect the socio-economic characteristics of the respondents. Organizational conflict inventory-II (ROCH-II) developed by Rahim in the year 1983 was used to understand the style of Conflict management in the organization. The instrument contains 28 statements with 5-point likert-type items that ranged from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Cronbach alphas range from .61 for compromising to .81 for avoiding. Test –retest correlations for the five scales for integrating, .83 for obliging, .81 for dominating, .76 for avoiding, .79 for compromising, .60 for both the co-efficient of internal consistency and test re-test correlations show moderate to good evidence of reliability for all subscales. Guttman split half co- efficient was ranged from 0.864

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS

Findings Related to Socio-Demographic Details

- More than one-third of the respondents (39.78%) belong to the age group of above 26 years.
- Majority of the respondents (73%) were unmarried
- More than half of the respondents (68.3%) educational qualification was Bachelors of Engineering.
- More than one-third of the respondents (58.7%) have 2 two years of working experiences.
- More than one-third of the respondents (39.7%) monthly income was Rs.15, 000.

Table 1: Distribution of the Respondents by their Level of Organizational Conflict Management in Various Styles

S. No	Organizational Conflict Management	No. of Respondents (n: 63)	Percentage
1	Integrating Style		
	Low	32	50.8
	High	31	49.2
2	Obliging style		
	Low	41	65.1
	High	22	34.9
3	Dominating style		
	Low	38	60.3
	High	25	39.7
4	Avoiding style		
	Low	37	58.7
	High	26	41.3
5	Compromising style		
	Low	37	58.7
	High	26	41.3
6	Overall Organizational Conflict		
	Low	30	47.6
	High	33	52.4

With regard to the level of organizational conflict experienced by the respondents, more than half of the respondents (50.8%) have low level of integrating style while nearly half of the respondents (49.2%) have high level of integrating style.

Majority of the respondents (65.1%) have low level of obliging style while more than one third of the respondents (34.9 %) have high level of obliging style.

Majority of the respondents (60.3%) have low level of dominating style while more than one third of the respondents (39.7 %) have high level of dominating style.

More than half of the respondents (58.7%) have low level of avoiding style while more than one third of the respondents (41.3 %) have high level of avoiding style.

More than half of the respondents (58.7%) have low level of compromising style while more than one third of the respondents (41.3 %) have high level of compromising style.

Overall score indicates that more than half of the respondents (52.4%) have high level of organizational conflict and nearly half of the respondents (47.6%) have low level of organizational conflict.

Table 2: 't' Test between the Marital Status of the Respondents with Regard to their Level of Organizational Conflict Management

S. No	Marital Status	\bar{X}	S. D.	Statistical Inference
1	Integrating Style			t = -0.205
	Married	29.0588	3.96028	P > 0.05
	unmarried	29.3043	4.29920	Not Significant
	Obliging style			t = -0.478
2	Married	23.2353	3.71701	P > 0.05
	unmarried	23.6957	3.27190	Not Significant
3	Dominating style			t = -1.019
	Married	16.2941	4.94678	P > 0.05
	unmarried	17.4565	3.63138	Not Significant
	Avoiding style			t = -1.981
4	Married	17.1176	4.12132	P < 0.05
	unmarried	18.9130	2.86609	Significant
5	Compromising style			t = 0.220
	Married	14.8235	3.90889	P > 0.05
	unmarried	14.6304	2.74355	Not Significant
	Overall Organizational Conflict			t = 0.866
6	Married	100.530	16.84532	P > 0.05
	unmarried	104.000	13.00769	Not Significant

The above table shows that, there is a significant difference between the marital statuses of the respondents with regard to their dimension of avoiding style and there is no significant difference between the marital status of the respondents with regard to their dimensions in integrating style, dominating style, obliging style and compromising styles and overall level of organizational conflict Management. Hence this shows that the marital status influence their perception in avoiding style and at the same time the marital status does not influence their perception in integrating style, dominating style, obliging style and compromising styles.

Table 3: Karl Pearson's Co-Efficient of Correlation between the Age of the Respondents and their Level of Organizational Conflict Management

S. No	Variable	Correlation Value	Statistical Inference
1	Age and Integrating Style	0.178	P > 0.05 Not Significant
2	Age and Obliging style	0.158	P > 0.05 Not Significant
3	Age and Dominating style	0.153	P > 0.05 Not Significant
4	Age and Avoiding style	0.247	P > 0.05 Not Significant
5	Age Compromising style	0.106	P > 0.05 Not Significant
6	Age Overall Organizational Conflict	0.012	P > 0.05 Not Significant

The above table depicts that there is no significant relationship between the age of the respondents and in the dimensions of organizational conflict management namely, integrating style, dominating style, avoiding style, obliging style, compromising style and overall organizational conflict management.

SUGGESTIONS

- The employees should be guided by their team leaders to enhance the healthy relationship among their subordinates
- Documentation can be improved, more incentives and other rewards can be given to employees who contribute their knowledge in their organization
- The human resource department should identify the areas in which the conflict management techniques are being well utilized.

- Conflict management practices should be monitored carefully and the latest practices in the industry should be implemented.

CONCLUSIONS

Conflict management is an equal important factor for an organizations to lead an organization without conflicts in their managements and to improve their profit and productivity.

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