Interpersonal Conflict Styles and Employees Well-Being Concern Study

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ABSTRACT

Conflict often plays a major role in the work organization. It is often seen as a fight, a straggle, uncomfortable work place. No doubt, there are more and more conflicts occur in our organization today. Somehow the conflict reasons should be identify and understand. It is known that organization might have more conflict under such condition: various environments, various employee differences, less time for face to face communication, cross-culture management. However, conflict occurs in organizations might not be destructive. It provided the opportunity of energy associated with tight relationship and directed toward problem solving and organizational improvement. However, managing conflict effectively requires that all parties understand the nature of conflict in the workplace. There are two organization views of conflicts: the dysfunctional view of organizational conflict is embedded in the notion that organizations are designed to achieve goals by creating structures that perfectly define job responsibilities, authorities, and other job functions. Second, the functional view of organizational conflict oversees conflict as a productive force, one that can stimulate employees in the organization to increase their knowledge, skills and total outcome. As well as their contributions to organizational innovation creative and powerful productivity. In the employees’ view conflict is under that two basically things that affect the manage conflict in a given situation. One is how much employee care about achieving his or her own goals - how assertive you are. The other is how much employees’ care about relationships - how cooperative you are. No one reacts and manages all conflicts in the same way. In this study will use different styles to fit different situations. There are five conflict management styles based on how important goals and relationships to the conflicting subjects. Each conflict management style has different degree strengths and weaknesses for individual consequence and employees display all of the styles to some degree.

Key words: Conflict management, employee core competency, conflict styles.

INTRODUCTION

Whether conflict within an organization is focused as desirable or not, the fact is that conflict exists and is usual culture. As human beings interact in organizations, differing values and situations create tension relationship. Conflict is viewed as a situation in which two or more individuals operating within a unit appear to be incompatible. However, handling organizational conflict is high costly. It consuming 20 percent of a manager's time (Thomas & Schmidt, 1976), and unresolved conflict can result in antisocial behavior, covert retaliation (Spector, 1997), and violence (Luckenbill & Doyle, 1989).After conflict is recognized, acknowledged and managed in a proper manner, personal and organizational benefits will accrue by the top level management. As well as effective manager uses this situation as an opportunity for growth for both the organization and individuals.

Effective managers use conflict creatively to stimulate personal development, to address apparent problems, to increase critical vigilance and self-appraisal, and to examine conflicting values when making decisions (Blome, 1983, p. 4-5). In the past, management theorists used the term "conflict avoidance", but
today this phrase is increasingly replaced with the phrase (and concept) of "conflict management". Conflict management recognizes that while conflict does have associated costs, it can also bring with it great benefits. Today's managers seek reasons not to avoid, moreover to dealing with conflict within the organization (Nurmi and Darling, 1997, pp. 157-158).

The purpose of this study reviews is collects the research literature theories and introduce the concept of behavioral style in organization conflict as a tool whereby managers can more effectively manage conflict within their organizations. The concept of behavioral style, adapted from the principle of social style provides a useful paradigm for helping individuals in an organization understand themselves and others. An understanding of behavioral style thereby provides a basis for visualizing personal strengths and weaknesses of individuals, and procedures for dealing with high stress in organizational relationships. Models for interpersonal flexing - what we call Style Flex - are also introduced as techniques through which managers can adjust their behaviors. This adjustment enables these managers to more effectively understand and interact with others, thereby contributing to successful conflict management in organizational settings. (Bolton and Bolton, 1984; Merrill and Reid, 1981).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conflict arises due to a variety of factors. Individual differences in goals, expectations, values, proposed courses of action, and suggestions about how to best handle a situation are unavoidable. When we add to these differences the unease arising out of a business’ future, conflict often increases (Walker, 1986, p137-149). Conflict is further exacerbated today by changes in technology, global shifting of power, political unrest, and financial uncertainties. These factors - and many others - make conflict a reality. To some managers, this inevitable disharmony is lamentable and should be avoided at all costs. To others, conflict presents exciting possibilities for the future, particularly if managed in a positive, constructive fashion (Darling and Fogliasso, 1999, p384-385).

Traditionally, conflict within an organization has been seen as a sign of a problem. Conflict meant there were differences of opinion, alternatives which needed to be considered, and opposing points of view to be studied. Today, the fact that conflict signals these very things is often seen as a sign of a very good organization. Perhaps a comparison would be an organism in the plant or animal world that finds itself in a hostile environment. If the organism develops the coping skills necessary to survive in the environment, it will change and thrive. If it does not, it will die. Adaptation, accommodation and flexibility are the keys to survival in such a situation (Mazmanien and Nienaber, 1979, p 191-194).

Organizations are often found to be in similar precarious situations, and the same survival skills apply in the organizational setting. Changes in operational procedures, personnel, clientele, product line, financial climate, and even corporate philosophy and/or vision will happen. Managers need to develop flexible, new coping skills to continue functioning in a positive, productive way in the midst of sometimes unsettling events. The productivity of confrontation arises from the fact that conflict can lead to change, change can lead to adaptation, and adaptation can lead to survival and even prosperity (Walton, 1976, p5-7).

Managers may feel uncomfortable with conflict. Many see it as something to be suppressed in all situations. But a more realistic, practical view of discord presents a different picture. While traditionally managers have seen their role as being to keep the peace at all costs, a more enlightened view is that managers view conflict as an indication that something needs their attention (Nurmi and Darling, 1997, p158-165). Just as a physical discomfort may signal a more serious personal physical problem which needs attention, conflict may signal a potentially serious (or developing) comparable situation for the organization.

Rahim (1986) note that organizational conflict should be managed rather than resolved to enhance
individual, group, and system wide effectiveness. The management of organizational conflict involves the diagnosis of and intervention in conflict at intrapersonal, interpersonal, intragroup, and intergroup levels. A diagnosis should indicate whether there is need for intervention and the type of intervention needed. Intervention may be designed to attain and maintain a moderate amount of conflict at various level: and to enable the organizational members to learn the styles of handling interpersonal conflict so that the individual, group, and overall organizational effectiveness are enhanced.

The difference between resolution and management of conflict is more than semantic. Conflict resolution implies reduction or elimination of conflict, whereas the management of conflict does not necessarily imply reduction or elimination of conflict.

Wilson and Jerrell (1981) have noted the positive consequences of conflict organizations in which there is little or no conflict may stagnate. On the other hand, organizational conflict left uncontrolled may have dysfunctional effects. The consensus among organization theorists is that a moderate amount of conflict is necessary for attaining an optimum organizational effectiveness. Brown (1983) has suggested that conflict management can require intervention to reduce conflict if there is too much, or intervention to promote conflict if there is too little. (p. 9).

There are various styles of behavior for handling Interpersonal conflict. For conflicts to be managed functionally, one style may be more appropriate than another depending upon the situation. Mary P. Follett (1940) found three main ways of dealing with conflict: domination, compromise, and integration. She also found other ways of handling conflict in organizations, such as avoidance and suppression. Blake and Mouton (1964) first presented a conceptual scheme for classifying the modes (styles) for handling interpersonal conflicts into five types: forcing, withdrawing, smoothing, compromising, and problem solving. Rahim and Bonoma (1979) differentiated the styles of handling conflict on two basic dimensions, concern for self and for others. The first dimension explains the degree (high or low) to which a person attempts to satisfy his or her own concern. The second dimension explains the degree (high or low) to which a person wants to satisfy the concern of others. Combination of the two dimensions results in five specific styles of handling conflict (Rahim, 1983).

The review of these styles of handling interpersonal conflict and the situations in which these are appropriate have been presented below. The details of these have been presented elsewhere (Rahim, 1986).

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**Figure 1. Conflict Style and Interpersonal Concerns**

**Withdrawing (avoiding): Low Relationships, Low Coals (low concern for self and others)**

Avoiding is most often associated with negative substantive outcomes (De Dreu, 1997; Hocker & Wilmot, 1998), as issues are not resolved, and usually become more serious over time, in case of interdependence between the parties. Gross and Guerrero (2000) found that avoiding as a conflict style is seen as situationally and relationally inappropriate, as well as ineffective, when it comes to achieving personal and dyadic outcomes. Avoiding as the dominant style often results in 'chilling,' with disputants becoming increasingly cold and withdrawn. All authors argue that avoiding can be effective in the short run, but has negative effects in long term. Also, these conclusions are based on avoiding being the dominant style. In combination with other conflict behaviors (such as forcing), avoiding of specific issues can contribute to effectiveness. For example, in case of temporarily leaving the conflict scene, to cool down or to reconsider ones position, avoiding can contribute to effectiveness (Van de Vliert, 1997). In this style people who are willing to give up both personal goals and relationships withdraw from conflict. They are
neither assertive nor cooperative. If the group allows them to they will avoid the actual conflict and become outside observers. By listening to their input, the group can gain invaluable feedback on emergent points of discussion, as well as team members' behaviors that are fostering or inhibiting resolution. They also have the following characteristics: they are neither assertive nor cooperative, stay away from issues where there is conflict, They believe conflict is difficult to break and it is easier to withdraw physically or psychologically from a conflict rather than to face it.

**Forcing (dominating): Low Relationships, High Goals(high concern for self and low concern for others)**

Forcing, or fighting, contending and seeking to prevail at the expense of the adversary is likely to result in a negative relationship between conflict parties (Van de Vliert, 1997). People who pursue goals at the expense of relationships are competitive and forceful. They are highly assertive and not particularly cooperative. These people can bring progress to a group that lacks direction or is stalled in debate. Forcing is negatively related with concern for the other party, which will usually not improve the relationship (Sorenson, Morse, & Savage, 1999). In contrast, studies on the impact of forcing on substantive outcomes show mixed results. Although it has been found in some studies that individuals can achieve substantive outcomes through forcing behavior (De Dreu & Van de Vliert, 1997; Rahim, 1992; Thomas, 1992), other studies have suggested that substantive joint outcomes decrease with increased forcing (Van de Vliert et al., 1995). Gross and Guerrero (2000) demonstrate dominating behavior as relationally inappropriate, while hardly effective at all. We therefore conclude that the effect of forcing on substantive outcomes is zero, or mediocre, and that forcing will impair the social relationship. The other characteristics of this conflict include the following: keep on track with goals, like to win and they assume conflicts are usually win/lose and winning gives them a sense of pride and achievement.

**Smoothing (obliging): High Relationships, Low Goals (low concern for self and high concern for others)**

Smoothing, giving in to the other parties' wishes, did not have a unique contribution to outcomes within the 'ladder of effectiveness' (Van de Vliert et al., 1995). Smoothing is not likely to produce much substantive outcomes, as the quality of decision making decreases with increasing Smoothing behavior by one or both of the parties (Mastenbroek, 1989; Papa & Canary, 1995). Some authors suggest that Smoothing contributes to the interpersonal relationship (Papa & Canary, 1995; Rahim, 1992). Gross and Guerrero (2000) argue that obliging is seen as neither relational nor situationally appropriate, nor effective, and conclude that this behavioral style is relatively benign. The unique contribution within the conglomerate therefore will be hardly visible the characteristics are associated with these people: they want to be accepted and liked by others, and they think conflict should be avoided in favor of harmony, it is necessary to set aside or compromise goals and they will keep their own ideas to themselves. Also they worry about people can't deal with conflict without damaging relationships.

**Confronting (integrating): High Relationships, High Goals(high concern for self and others)**

Confronting behavior, People who place high value on relationships and goals are assertive and cooperative. They are likely to confront others and collaborate to accomplish for an objective. They view conflicts as problems to solve and as a way to improve relationships each other; demanding attention to the conflict issue, did not make a significant contribution to conflict outcomes, within the conglomerate (Van de Vliert et al., 1995). As argued above, this may have been caused by the fact that confronting has a positive
effect on substantive outcomes, while simultaneously having a negative effect on the relational outcomes. Several authors emphasize the importance of confrontation for achieving substantive outcomes. Confrontation is used to define and analyze conflict issues (Fisher, 1997; Turner & Pratkanis, 1997). On the other hand, this confronting behavior easily puts strains on the interpersonal relation, and may contribute negatively to relational outcomes (Euwema, 1992; Van de Vliert, et al., 1995). This may even be an important reason why people hesitate to confront others with conflict issues in the first place (Euwema, 1992). Some of the characteristics listed below: They take too long trying to find perfection and they are not satisfied until they find a solution that achieves the goal and resolves any negative feelings. also they can irritate others as a result of their behaviors.

Compromising: Medium Relationships, Medium Goals (intermediate in concern for self and others)

People who place medium value on goals and relationships believe in compromise. They are moderately assertive and cooperative and spend time looking for solutions but are not looking for perfection. Compromising implies searching for intermediate positions, satisfying only some of both parties needs. Some authors describe compromising as 'half hearted problem solving,' whereas others see it as a distinct strategy, making conditional promises and threats (De Dreu, Evers, Beersma, Kluwer, & Nauta, 2001; Van de Vliert, 1997). Within the 'ladder of effectiveness,' compromising worked out positively, but hardly made a unique contribution to (the combination of substantive and relational) outcomes. Pruitt and Carnevale (1993) argue that a compromise is associated with a strong conciliatory tendency, coupled with moderate concern for self. Compromising was found to be relatively high on relational appropriateness, though hardly effective or situationally appropriate (Gross & Guerrero, 2000). This suggests that compromising primarily contributes to relational outcomes, and less to substantive outcomes. It is the characteristics: They are flexible and adaptive, go for splitting the difference, exchanging concessions, or seeking middle ground. Also they seem like overly political or can't make up their minds.

Conflict and well-Being: employees core competency concerns

In this second part of literature review, organizational conflict will have positive effectiveness employee’s outcomes and performance in individual competency. However, conflict is viewed as a process that begins when an individual or group perceives differences and opposition between oneself and another individual or group about interests, beliefs or values that matter to them (De Dreu, Harinck, & Van Vianen, 1999; Kelley & Thibaut, 1978; Wall & Callister, 1995). Within work organizations Amason (1996) also note that there are distinguished conflict processes evolving between work and task-related issues, or around socio-emotional and relationship issues. Such as examples of task conflict are conflicts about the distribution of resources, about procedures and policies, and about judgments and interpretation of facts. Examples of relationship conflict are conflicts about personal taste, about political preferences, about values, and about interpersonal style.

How individuals respond to conflict issues depends on their concern for their own outcomes and for the opposing party's outcomes. According to Dual Concern Theory (Carnevale & Pruitt, 1992; Pruitt & Rubin, 1986; Blake & Mouton, 1964; Thomas, 1992), conflict management is a function of high or low concern for self combined with high or low concern for other. High self concern and low concern for the other results in a preference for forcing-trying to impose one's will onto the other side. Forcing involves threats and bluffs, persuasive arguments, and positional commitments. Low self concern and high concern for the other results in a preference for yielding, which is oriented towards accepting and incorporating the other's will. It involves unilateral concessions, unconditional promises, and offering help. Low self concern and low concern for the other results in a preference for inaction and avoiding, which involves a passive stance,
attempts to reduce and downplay the importance of the conflict issues, and attempts to suppress thinking about them. High self concern, and high concern for the other, finally, produces a preference for problem solving, which is oriented towards achieving an agreement that satisfies both own and the other's aspirations as much as possible. Problem solving involves an exchange of information about priorities and preferences, showing insights, and making tradeoffs between important and unimportant issues.

In Dual Concern Theory, concern for self and concern for other are predicted by one's personality and the situation (De Dreu, Weingart, & Kwon, 2000; Pruitt & Rubin, 1986). Van de Vliert (1997) point out that stable individual differences such as social value orientation, power motivation, and need for affiliation, and situation cues such as incentives, instructional primes, time pressures, level of aspiration, and power preponderance, predict conflict management through their influence on self concern and concern for the other.

Somehow situational influences may cause individuals to adopt different conflict management strategies across time, work settings are often highly stable and quite predictable. Employees interact with the same co-workers, incentive structures do not change overnight, employees do the same kind of work for longer periods of time, and they face the same (interpersonal) problems on a recurring basis. In addition, individuals within the same unit, team or department tend to influence one another (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1977), thus creating their own social environment with, most likely, rather stable and socially shared preferences for, and views about, the tasks to be done and the ways of dealing with one another (Mohammed, Klimoski, & Reutsch, 2000).

De Dreu, (1997) mention that the types of conflict that emerge in work units are likely same function as the culturally scripted ways of viewing and managing conflict, affect individual and work unit performance in a number of ways. Although it is not our goal here to review but still need to have a shortly discuss this work, it is important to briefly note that some task-related conflict in organizations is better than no conflict at all (Robbins, 1974; Walton, 1969). Although high levels of intense and prolonged conflict hurt individual and team performance, moderate levels of task-related conflict can mitigate biased and defective group decision-making (Schwenk, 1990). These positive consequences of conflict tend to come about especially when relationship conflict is absent and when members have high dual concern, engage in problem solving and "constructive controversy," and thus debate in an open-minded way about their opposing views, beliefs and opinions (Tjosvold, 1998; Simons & Peterson, 2000).

Health and well-being not only trigger conflict, but can also be the result of it. In and by itself, conflict involves emotions such as anger, disgust and fear. Being in conflict threatens one's self-esteem and requires cognitive resources to cope with the situation. Negative emotions, threatened self-esteem and heightened cognitive effort impact the physiological system in a multitude of ways: Adrenaline levels go up, heartbeat accelerates, and muscle tension increases (Quick et al., 1997; McEwen, 1998). In addition, interaction with conflict opponents may go hand in hand with verbal, and sometimes physical violence resulting in sour throats, bloody noses, and twisted arms. Quite obviously, in the short run, conflict has more negative than positive consequences for health and well-being. In the long run, however, matters may be more complicated. Research suggests that continuously high levels of stress-hormones deplete the physiological system (McEwen, 1998), and result in psychosomatic complaints including enduring headaches, upset stomach (Pennebaker, 1982). There is also evidence that prolonged stress negatively impacts the immune system, so in the long run, will also increase susceptibility to "real" illness. The extended elevation of arousal levels goes together with an increase in the release of cortisol. This corticosteroid has been shown to cause an atrophy of the lymphoid structures and therefore acts to impair the circulatory system of the body. Injuring the function of the immune system in this way leaves the organism open to viruses, bacteria and parasites, resulting in infections and other "real" illnesses (Clow, 2001; Evans, Hucklebridge & Clow, 2000). The detrimental impact of conflict can be seen in the sometimes disastrous, consequences of workplace
bullying. A large survey study by the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions revealed that 9% of the 21,500 respondents was confronted with bullying behavior (Merlié & Paoli, 2001), that 2% faced sexual harassment, and that 2% faced (threats of) physical violence from co-workers or supervisors. Generalized to the European labor force this means that about 15 million people face, on a continuous and systematic basis, bullying behavior, sexual harassment, or physical aggression in the workplace (Zapf, Knorz, & Kulla, 1996). Other surveys indicate that exposure to systematic bullying can result in severe health problems, as exemplified by psychosomatic complaints and posttraumatic anxiety disorders (Einarsen, 1999). Interestingly, bystanders of systematic bullying—colleagues witnessing bullying in their work environment—tend to report more health problems and lower job satisfaction than employees not witnessing systematic bullying at work (Hubert, Furda, & Steensma, 2002)

Spector, Chen, and O’Connell (2000) found positive and moderate correlations between conflict at work and anxiety and frustration, and a small but significant correlation between conflict at work and physical complaints. Many other studies, often using different measurement scales, reported highly similar results (Frone, 2000; Rahim, 1983; Beehr, Drexler, & Faulkner, 1997; Hillhouse, 1997; Shirom & Mayer, 1993). Finally, a number of studies revealed moderately positive correlations between conflict at work and the exhaustion dimension of burnout (Leiter, 1991; Taylor, Daniel, Leith, & Burke, 1990; Rainey, 1999; Richardsen, Burke, & Leiter, 1992; Van Dierendonck, Schaufeli, & Sixma, 1994).

Taken together, there is reason to expect poor health to trigger conflict at work, and to expect that conflict at work deteriorates health, resulting in psychosomatic complaints and feelings of burnout. Empirical research corroborates these ideas, although it must be noted that this research base is largely cross-sectional.

Figure 2. The interplay between core competency, Personal well-being, conflict management, personality Characteristics, Culture and Gender.

CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Organizations are inherently competitive and conflict-ridden (Pondy, 1992), and this is likely to become more appreciable when employees gain autonomy, when self-management and individual responsibilities replace traditional values and focus on the collective, and when work units become more
heterogeneous in terms of cultural and demographic characteristics (Williams & O'Reilly, 1998). Although increases in competitiveness and conflict at work need not to be detrimental for productivity competitiveness and conflict may have considerable negative consequences for employee well-being, health, job satisfaction, and commitment to their organization. (Tjosvold, 1998)

We have presented a model that proposes that conflict at work results from, and leads to poor health and lowered well-being. Conflict management is viewed as a coping response to emerging conflict, and may either strengthen or weaken the negative relationship between conflict and health. However, this will be the reason of measure the employee’s core competency. These patterns were argued to be stronger when conflict concerns interpersonal and socio-emotional issues rather than issues related to the task people perform. When conflict is task-related and dealt with in a cooperative, active way its consequences for individual well-being appear less severe and may even evaporate.

Although the mode has intuitive appeal and it is consistent with general theories on occupational health and work-related stress, it should be noted that the empirical foundation for the model is not clear. Whereas we identified a variety of studies yielding highly consistent results, almost without exception were these studies cross-sectional in nature, and conclusions relied on self-report data regarding conflict, conflict management, and individual health and well-being. This makes two problems that should be addressed in future studies. First, there is the possibility that a substantial part of the shared variance reflects common-method/common source bias by difference. It might happened of correlation between conflict at work and individual health complaints may be much lower, and the role of moderator variables becomes much more important by self report. This would lead to a more complex model that incorporates such moderators as the hierarchical relationship between conflict parties, organizational structure, organization culture, structure status level of nature of the tasks people do. However, it is necessary to set up scenario and test the hypothesis by using reliable instrument in the further research.

Second, it cannot be excluded that the associations between conflicts (management) or personal conflict styles handling at work and health indicators are not reflecting a causal sequence in one way or the other. On the other hand, the correlations that discovery from the literature may largely reflect two different consequences of a third variable or more. For instance, it may be that those employees with high levels of negative (positive) affectivity develop more (less) conflict at work or at home and, independently, have lower (higher) well-being and more (fewer) health complaints also offer higher personal productivity. Studies controlling for individual differences in positive and negative affectivity may be used to deal with this issue (Spector, Zapf, Chen, & Frese, 2000). Moreover, it may be that interpersonal or group relations in organizations characterized by high levels of cooperation (competition) have fewer (more) intense conflicts and, independently, more (less) healthy and happy members. Studies controlling for organizational or group climate may be used to deal with this issue.

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