

CONFLICT MANAGEMENT: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

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INTRODUCTION

In an organizational setting, there may be several forms of interpersonal conflicts, such as hierarchical conflict between various levels of management, functional conflict between occupational specialists, professional vs. professional conflict, and so on. These conflicts may be interpreted in two forms: vertical conflict and horizontal conflict.

Vertical relationship, that is mostly in the form of superior-subordinate relationship, results into vertical conflicts which usually arise because superior attempts to control the behaviour of his subordinates, and subordinates resist such control. A subordinate may resist such control as he feels that his superior tries to control activities outside the scope of his control and he perceives conflict with his superior and the latter may feel when his attempt of control is thwarted. He is likely to interpret subordinate's resistance as due to resentment of the exercise of personal power. This perception of the behaviour may be grounded either on realities or may be due to misunderstanding between superior and subordinate.

The non-resolution of this conflict may not necessarily terminate the relationship; however, this may become a serious problem to the efficiency of the organization. More differences between superior and subordinates may create more conflict between them which ultimately adds more inefficiency to the organization. It may be argued that a superior enjoys the hierarchical support because of his position in the authority relationship; he may suppress the conflict and thereby he can remove its consequence but it is possible that he may be denied the full cooperation of his subordinates and he may be proved to be a poor superior thereby causing his position weak in the organization.

Horizontal conflict at interpersonal level is among the persons at the same hierarchical level in the same function or in different functions. Within each functional group, there may be many individuals and these individuals interact among themselves. Such interactions maybe contacts for the purpose of giving, taking, and soliciting advice, counsel, information, and skilled assistance on difficult problems¹.

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Likert, Rensis and Likert, Jane G. (1976), describes principles and procedures that increase the probability of finding a solution to a conflict that is acceptable to all parties. These principles and procedures are derived from a management system with better resources for managing conflict than other systems. Emphasis is placed on a generally neglected step in problem solving that helps keep conflict from intruding into the problem-solving process.

Karen A. Jehn, (1994)² in a study investigates the benefits and detriments of emotional and task-related conflict in work groups. Group value consensus (GVC), or the extent to which group members share values, and group value fit (GVF), or the degree to which the culture of the group matches the ideal culture envisioned by external parties with control over the group, are hypothesized to decrease conflict. In examining 88 workgroups performing comparable organizational tasks, it was found that groups with low levels of value similarity among members and between the group and governing superiors had higher levels of conflict than groups with high levels of value similarity. As hypothesized, emotional conflict was negatively associated with group performance and satisfaction, while task conflict was positively associated with group performance. The implications of these results for conflict management and group effectiveness are discussed.

In a study made by Steve Alper, Dean Tjosvold and Kenneth S. Law, (2000)³, it was discussed that cooperative approach to conflict leads to conflict efficacy that in turn results ineffective performance as measured by managers. Turk (2000) made a study upon 1400 worker conducted at the University of North Carolina measured the fallout of workplace conflict. 53 per cent of those survey said “they lost time at work” 37 per cent said” there commitment to the employer decrease due to conflict. 12 per cent said” conflict cause them to leave the job”

Andrea M. Bodtker and Jessica Katz Jameson, (2001)⁴ states that a growing body of research suggests that conflict can be beneficial for groups and organizations (e.g., De Dreu & Van De Vliert, 1997). This paper articulates the argument that to be in conflict is to be emotionally activated (Jones, 2000) and utilizes Galtung’s

(1996) triadic theory of conflict transformation to locate entry points for conflict generation. Application of these ideas is presented through exemplars that demonstrate the utility of addressing emotions directly in the management of organizational conflicts.

Carsten K.W. De Dreu and Annelies E.M. Van Vianen (2001)⁵ stated that past research has revealed that team effectiveness and satisfaction suffer when teams experience relationship conflict-related to interpersonal issues, political norms and values, and personal taste. This study examined how teams should respond to these conflicts. Three types of conflict responses were studied: collaborating responses, contending responses, and avoiding responses. A field study involving heterogeneous sample of teams performing complex, non-routine task showed that collaborating and contending responses to relationship conflict negatively relate to team functioning (i.e., voice, compliance, helping behavior) and overall team effectiveness, while avoiding responses were associated with high team functioning and effectiveness. It is suggested that collaborating and contending responses to relationship conflict distract team members from their tasks, while avoiding responses appear more functional in that they allow team members to pursue task performance.

De Dreu, Carsten K. W. Weitingart and Laurie R. (2003)⁶ in a study provides analysis of research on the associations between relationship conflict, task conflict, team performance, and team member satisfaction. Consistent with past theorizing, results revealed strong and negative correlations between relationship conflict, team performance, and team member satisfaction. In contrast to what has been suggested both academic research and introductory textbooks, however, results also revealed strong and negative (instead of the predicted positive) correlations between relationship conflict, team performance, and team member satisfaction. As predicted, conflict had stronger negative relations with team performance in highly complex (decision project, mixed) than in less complex (production) tasks. Finally, task conflict was negatively related to team performance when task conflict and relationship conflict were weakly, rather than strongly, correlated.

Henri Barki, Jon Hartwick, (2004)⁷ observed that the lack of a clear conceptualization and operationalization of the construct of interpersonal conflict makes it difficult to compare the results of different studies and hinders the accumulation of knowledge in the conflict domain. Defining interpersonal conflict as a dynamic process that occurs between interdependent parties as they experience negative emotional reactions to perceived disagreements and interference with the attainment of their goals, the present paper presents a two-dimensional framework and a typology of interpersonal conflict that incorporates previous conceptualizations of the construct. The first dimension of the framework identifies three properties generally associated with conflict situations: disagreement, negative emotion, and interference. The framework's second dimension identifies two

targets of interpersonal conflict encountered in organizational settings: task and interpersonal relationship. Based on this framework, the paper highlights several shortcomings of current conceptualizations and operationalizations of interpersonal conflict in the organizational literature, and provides suggestions for their remedy.

Steve Alper, Dean Tjosvold and Kenneth S. Law (2006)⁸ a study on Conflict management, Efficacy, and performance in Organizational teams empirically links conflict management literature with research on efficacy and organizational teams. Sixty-one self-managing teams with 489 employees were recruited from the production department of a leading electronic manufacturer. Structural equation analysis supports the model that a cooperative instead of competitive approach to conflict leads to conflict efficacy that in turn results in effective performance as measured by managers. Findings suggest how organizational teams can be prepared to make use of their autonomy to deal with problems and conflicts so that they are productive.

Paul S. Hempel, Zhi-Xue Zhang and Dean Tjosvold (2009)⁹ found that trusting relationships are increasingly considered vital for making teams productive. We propose that cooperative management of conflict can help team members to be convinced that their teammates are trustworthy. Results from 102 organizations in China support the theorizing that how teams to manage conflict with each other affects within-team conflict management. Specifically, cooperative conflict between teams' helps teams to manage their internal conflicts cooperatively that strengthens trust that in turn facilitates team performance. Results provide support for managing conflict cooperatively as a foundation for trusting, productive relationships in China as well as in the West.

CONCLUSION

In an organizational setting, there may be several forms of interpersonal conflicts, such as hierarchical conflict between various levels of management, functional conflict between occupational specialists, professional vs. professional conflict, and so on. Congruence is found between gender role orientation and conflict handling styles. Collaboration, accommodation, compromise strategies produce relatively better outcomes for organization. High levels of collaboration contribute to positive outcome for organization & High level of compromise & accommodation contribute to positive inter-personal relationship. Task conflict can improve group outcomes.

Team effectiveness and satisfaction suffer when teams experience relationship conflict-conflict related to interpersonal issues, political norms and values, and personal taste. It is suggested that collaborating and

contending responses to relationship conflict distract team members from their tasks, while avoiding responses appear more functional in that they allow team members to pursue task performance. The experiential learning as an enabler to improve conflict management in a work team. The experiential learning program affects the ability of a work team to effectively manage conflict.

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