

The Relationship between Conflict Management Styles and Human Resources Performance Improvement in Educational Organizations

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Received: August 7, 2015
Accepted: January 21, 2016

ABSTRACT

The aim of this study was to investigate the relationship between conflict management styles and human resources performance improvement in educational organizations. This study was set up in correlational descriptive method. The population of 351 people, including managers, technical and professional college's deputies, with the use of Morgan sample volume estimation table randomly selected 184 people. Two types of questionnaires were used to collect the data. One of them was a questionnaire about conflict management styles (1991) and the other questionnaire was performance evaluation based on the Achieve model by Hersey and Goldsmith (1980) that its validity was reviewed by 20 experts and its reliability was calculated by the use of Cronbach's alpha and its reliability coefficient was respectively 0.83 and 0.89. In data analysis in order to investigate the relationship between styles of conflict management and human resources performance improvement in educational organizations, Pearson correlation test was used. The results showed that there was a positive relationship between the styles of cooperation, compromise and reconciliation in conflict management and human resources performance improvement and there was a negative and significant relationship between competitive and avoid styles in conflict management and human resources performance improvement. In the process of conflict management in organization, the use of cooperation styles, compromise and reconciliation was followed by human resources performance improvement and competitive and the use of competitive and avoid styles in conflict management, reduces human resources performance in in organization.

KEYWORDS: conflict management, performance improvement, human resources, educational organization.

1. INTRODUCTION

Today, the human resources is regarded as the main asset in organizations and as their competitive advantage. The existence of cooperation and solidarity among these valuable resources is of the most important fundamental factors for the success of all organizations. Conflict in organization is inevitable and is not necessarily unnecessary for the organization. Conflicts can promote creativity and performance improvement or may result in the waste of energy resources of organization. Managers in order to appropriately manage conflict, must consider it as a permanent force and manage it by constructive and appropriate approach in order to achieve dynamism in organization. Thus, the ability to direct and control the phenomenon of conflict in organizations is regarded as of the most important skills of managers (Amirkabiri, 2006). The growth of an organization depends on how to deal with conflicts. Essentially, the lack of conflict cannot provide the best conditions for survival. Method of decision-making in conflict can be constructive or destructive. Constructive method in conflict helps us to see the situation from different angles, but the destructive method can guide to destruction. Therefore, conflict management is the most important condition which is related to the growth of the organization (Zand et al, 2008). The existence of different people with different personality traits, needs, beliefs, expectations and perceptions made outbreak of conflict inevitable in organizations. People have different communication practices, aspirations, political and religious views and also different cultural backgrounds. In various countries, the existence of such differences lead to conflict between individuals and groups (Erfurt, 2002). Hence, the existence of differences and motivations distinct from each other in employees of the organizations on the one hand and stability of the organization on the principal of collaboration and coordination of people and the components of the organization on the other hand, makes the organizational context inevitable to organizational conflicts (Katz and Kahn, 1978). Researchers defined conflict as a process of interaction that reveals incompatibility or heterogeneity within or between social institutions (Rahim et al, 2002; Seyad Ameri, 2010). Conflict occurs in organizations because of various sources, some of which include:

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- Goals and incompatible time horizons: the lack of coordination between short-term and long-term goals, objectives and goals of the different parts of the organization can be a potential cause of conflict.
- Authorizations interference: when two directors or two parts claim the same authority for the same activity or work.
- Discordant evaluation and reward system: if the reward evaluation system is not compatible with the evaluation system, it will be a potential factor to creating a conflict.
- The interdependence of tasks: When individuals, groups or sectors with tasks that are interdependent with each other, work independently and separately.
- Insufficient resources: When the resources in organization is insufficient, achieving them may cause conflict.
- Dignity Paradoxes: the fact that some individuals, groups or departments within an organization are considered more than other individuals, groups and other sectors, is a fundamental factor to cause conflict (Jones et al, 2000).

Thus, conflict is inevitable and appears because of different goals, values and beliefs, but it can be driven, minimized and resolved (Erfurt, 2002). After identifying conflict, management must recognize damaging conflicts from the sound ones and in case of being destructive solve the conflict and in case of being sound, properly benefit it in order to strengthen cooperation and cross-enterprise communications (Vivar, 2006). By strengthening cooperation, the possibility of establishing a more coherent relationship appears and with the addition of organizational health, its effectiveness will improve. Conflict management is just dealing with conflict and proper utilization of it to meet the needs and for the efflorescence of talents and creativity (Slocum, 2002). So being aware of the knowledge and skills of conflict management seems necessary to use in organization. In general, there are five ways to respond to the conflicts that are called as conflict management styles and usually every individual is dominant in one of these styles. The first style is the competitive one in which the person is seeking his own goals and interests with no regard to others. Of these styles characteristics is that first it is not participatory and second it is power centered. The person applies any power that seems to be useful in particular situations. The second style is the style of compromise. This style is the opposite of competition style. The person ignores his goals and desires in order to help others to achieve goals and satisfy their needs. An important feature of this approach is self-sacrifice, but is still participatory. The third style is the style of avoidance. In this style the person nor follows his own goals and desires neither seeks interests and goals of others, and further demands to prolongation the situation of conflict or to delay or withdraw it. The fourth style is the style of cooperation. This style is the opposite of avoidance style. Here cooperation includes efforts to work with others to find a solution that lead to realization of both individual's goals. In other words, in this style the parties stood hard to gain their interest, but at the same time want to cooperate with each other and consider the interests of the other party. The main feature of this style is being participatory. The last style is the style of compromise. The goal of compromise is to find some acceptable measures and solution for both sides to relatively realize the interests and goals of the parties. In other words, this style was between the styles of compromise and competition and is relatively participatory. Here, the parties agree to back down from some part of their positions and give some points to their opponents (Rice, 2005). The other variable of the study is human resources performance improvement. About organizational performance improvement by exploring the literature on organizational performance improvement from Achieve model by researchers (Hersey Paul and Kenneth Edge, 1939.), that they divided this model into seven aspect including: ability, clarity, help, incentive, evaluation, validity, environment; we have defined the above mentioned aspects as Measures to improve performance which is the dependent variable in this study. Organizational performance improvement is the result of human, physical and financial interaction. Without specialized manpower, physical and financial resources cannot result in production and improve the services, but it can be achieved when the human element comes to work and it is understanding and behavior of human and its positive impact that can boost efficiency and improve organizational performance(Griffin, 1999). Performance improvement is part of the knowledge and experience of the management that its goal is to improve effectiveness and of organizations. In other words performance improvement can be considered as a set of developing strategies that their managers and organizations apply (Berman Evan, 2012). Another researcher (Fegghi Farahmand, 2002) has provided the effective factors in boosting the efficiency of organizational performance.

1) Hardware factors such as:

- The product through: a better design, expansion of research and development, marketing and sale by considering the appropriate quantity, quality, time and cost
- Machinery and equipment through: good and timely repair and maintenance, effective and appropriate use of their capacity, attention to the mode of operation, their durability and life long, innovation, cost, investment, capacity expansion and production planning

- Materials and energy through: the use of materials and providing useful product with less energy consumption per unit of product, selection of proper raw materials with good quality, waste management, increasing the quality of raw materials using the initial processes and preparation of raw materials for core processes of production, improving warehousing and inventory turnover
- 2) Software factors such as:
 - People through: the establishment of areas of cooperation, attention to human behavior, removing barriers to communication, standards and efforts to improve its performance, attention to satisfaction of the type of the work and job, showing the job as to be the most important and beneficial.
 - Organizations and systems through: unity of command, delegation of responsibilities, monitoring and control, division of labor and coordination
 - Procedures through: displacing manpower, tools, place of production, materials and machines that are used.
 - Management practices, including: human resources policies, job creation, planning, monitoring costs and capital sources, controlling methods.

In this direction, we will review the research done in the styles of conflict management and human resources performance. In a study in academic libraries of Nigeria the patterns of conflict management was investigated. The survey showed executives when faced with conflict, tend to use the avoidance style (Adomiand Ozioma Anie, 2006). A researcher (Haidari, 2004) also showed that school administrators are more likely to use solution finding strategy (cooperation and compromise) and lesser tend to coercive strategy. Another research (Sternberg and Soriano, 1976), found in a research that men prefer using coercive strategy, while women tend to the compromise and cooperation style (Haidari, 2004). Another survey (Srivasanand GeorgeS, 2005) also in a similar research, studied conflict management styles of male and female managers in school in Thailand. The results of this study indicated that the style used by male and female managers in removing conflicts, were respectively cooperation and compromise styles (Kalantari, 2008). Researchers (Antonioni, 1998; Olcumm Munevver and Hacufazhologlu, 2004) showed that if the conflict is managed carefully and diligently, will become an important tool in the development of the organization. Results of another survey (Ahmadi et al, 2013) showed that, there is a positive significant relationship between the styles of reconciliation, cooperation, compromise in conflict management and effectiveness and organizational success. A research results (Sorenson et al, 1995) showed that, there is a positive significant correlation between emotional intelligence and cooperation style in conflict management but a negative significant correlation between emotional intelligence and avoidance style in conflict management. Another study showed that executives when faced with conflict, respectively use the styles of compromise, cooperation, coercion, tolerance and avoidance. While, Dabiran believed that executives when faced with conflict respectively use compromise, coercion, cooperation, tolerance and avoidance (Sakha'ii Ghaleroodkhani, 1999). Researchers (Iranzade et al, 2013) showed that, there is a significant positive correlation between the styles of reconciliation, cooperation and compromise in conflict management and creativity of employees. It also indicated that there is a significant negative correlation between the style of coercion and creativity of employees. Another researchers (Canary and Spitzber, 1998) also did the study to investigate the relationship between individual merit and conflict management. The results suggest that strategies which were based on creating unity (synergy) were positively correlated with individual merit. However, practices based on avoidance and breaking off have the negative correlation with individual merit. A researcher (Ghorbani, 2000) in his study found relationship between the styles of conflict management and school effectiveness. The results showed that of the three solution-oriented approach, avoidance and monitoring, solution-oriented approach is most correlated with the effectiveness of schools. A researcher (Soleimani, 2002) in his study found relationship between job satisfaction, morale and attitudes of school staff towards conflict and styles of conflict management. Results have shown that employees who have high job satisfaction and morale, comparing to those with lower job satisfaction and morale use more effective styles and conflict management to solve conflict problem. Conversely, people who have low job satisfaction and morale are more likely than those with higher job satisfaction and morale use non-effective methods of conflict management to solve and the conflict problem. The results of this research is that employees with negative attitude towards conflict than employees with a positive attitude to conflict, more use avoidance style in dealing with conflicts between individual. A researcher (Seyad Amerin, 2010) in his research showed that, there is a significant relationship between the application of conflict management and job satisfaction and quality of the morale in sport coaches; so attention to effective approaches of conflict management between individuals, promotes job satisfaction and the morale of sport coaches working in the agencies of physical education. Researchers (Abbasiet al, 2010) to investigate the relationship between conflict management and effectiveness, showed that there is a positive significant correlation between conflict management in solution oriented strategy and the strategy of avoidance strategy and there is a negative significant correlation between the strategy of control and effectiveness. Researchers (Abbasi et al, 2010; Shahtalebi and Pardakhtchi, 2010) in their research indicated that, there is a

positive significant relationship between emotional intelligence and cooperation style in conflict management but there is a negative significant relationship between emotional intelligence and avoidance style in conflict management. Researchers [Rafiee and Zahedi, 2013] showed in their research that in confidence level 95% coordination between the human resources, decision making strategy, and cultural strategy causes to improve human resource performance. Researchers [Ghahramani and Heidari, 2013] also showed in their research that there is a positive significant correlation between the health of bureaucracy system and human resources performance improvement. According to the above mentioned, the present study sought to test the following hypothesis:

1. There is a relationship between the competitive style in conflict management and human resources performance improvement.
2. There is a relationship between the compromise style in conflict management and human resources performance improvement.
3. There is a relationship between the avoidance style in conflict management and human resources there performance improvement.
4. There is a relationship between the cooperation style in conflict management and human resources there performance improvement.
5. There is a relationship between the reconciliation style in conflict management and human resources there performance improvement.

2. METHODS AND MATERIALS

The aim of this study was to investigate the relationship between conflict management styles and human resources performance improvement in training organizations that was done in correlation descriptive approach. The population of 351 people, included managers and substitutes of technical colleges that using Morgan’s table of estimating sample volume, 184 individual were randomly selected. Data collection tools are two types of questionnaires as follows.

1. Conflict Management Styles Questionnaire, (occi = Organizational Communication Conflict Instrument, Form B) designed by L. L. Putnam and C. Wilson, was used. This questionnaire is brought in the book of organizational behavior by Robbins (1991). This questionnaire consists of 30 questions. So that five questions related to collaborative management style, six questions on the style of avoidance, five questions on the style of forgiveness, seven questions on compromise style and seven questions on the style of competition. A researcher (Sakha’ii Ghaheroodkhani, 1999) reported the reliability coefficient of the questionnaire to be 85/0. In this study, the validity of the questionnaire was examined by 20 experts and its reliability was calculated through Cronbach's alpha and the reliability coefficient of 0.83 was resulted.
2. The questionnaire on investigating the performance is based on achieve model of (Antonioni, 1998). The tool has seven aspects including: ability, clarity, help, motivation, evaluation, credit, environment and 35 questions. Researchers (Ghahramani and Heidari, 2013) reported the reliability coefficient of the questionnaire to be 0.78. In the present paper, validity of the questionnaire was examined by 20 experts and its reliability was calculated through Cronbach's alpha and the reliability coefficient was resulted 0.89. In analysis of the data to investigate the relationship between styles of conflict management and human resources performance improvement in educational organizations Pearson correlation test was used.

3. RESULTS

To examine the normality of distribution of research variables, Kolmogorov Smirnov test was used as follows (Tables 1,2) .

Table 1. Kolmogorov Smirnov test based on normality of conflict management variable data

184	number
1.18	Kolmogorov Smirnov test
0.053	Confidence level
a. Test distribution is Normal.	
b. Calculated from data.	

Kolmogorov Smirnov test with value of (1.18) and significant level of (0.053) showed that conflict management variable has a normal distribution and by assuming that variable is in distance scale, we can apply parametric statistics for analysis.

Table 2. Kolmogorov Smirnov test based on normality of human resources performance improvement variable data

184	number
1.03	Kolmogorov Smirnov test
0.083	Confidence level
a. Test distribution is Normal.	
b. Calculated from data.	

Kolmogorov Smirnov test with value of (1.03) and significant level of (0.083) showed that human resources performance improvement variable has a normal distribution and by assuming that variable is in distance scale, we can apply parametric statistics for analysis.

- 1- First hypothesis: there is a correlation between competitive style of conflict management and human resources performance improvement (Table 3).

Table 3. Results of the correlation between competitive style of conflict management and human resources performance improvement

Level of confidence	Direction of correlation	R Square (R) ²	Amount of correlation	Type of correlation	variables
0.000	negative	0.20	-0.458	Pearson	Competitive style with performance improvement

The results set forth in Table 3 show that there is a significant negative correlation a (-0.458 = r) between the two variables of competitive style and human resources performance improvement that this relationship is significant at alpha 0.01. In other words, the more executives use competitive style in the process of conflict management, human resources performance improvement will be reduced in organization. Also the calculated coefficient of determination shows that that competition style variable, explains 20/0 % of the human resources performance improvement variable variance.

- 2- The second hypothesis: there is a relationship between reconciliation style in conflict management and human resources performance improvement (Table 4).

Table 4. Results of correlation between reconciliation style in conflict management and human resources performance improvement

Level of confidence	Direction of correlation	R Square (R) ²	Amount of correlation	Type of correlation	variables
0.000	positive	0.14	0.385	Pearson	reconciliation style with performance improvement

The results set forth in Table 4 show that there is a significant positive correlation (r = 0.385) between the two variables of human resources performance improvement and reconciliation style that this relationship is significant at alpha 0.10. In other words, the more managers use compromise style in conflict management process human performance will be improved. Also the calculated coefficient of determination shows that the compromise style variable explains 0.14% of human resources performance variance.

- The third hypothesis: there is a relationship between the avoidance style in conflict management and human resources performance improvement (Table 5).

Table 5. Results of correlation between avoidance style of conflict management and human resources performance improvement

Level of confidence	Direction of correlation	R Square (R) ²	Amount of correlation	Type of correlation	variables
0.000	negative	0.21	-0.463	Pearson	avoidance style with performance improvement

The results set forth in Table 5 show that there is a significant negative relationship ($r = -0/462$) between the two variables of avoidance and Human Resources performance improvement that this relationship is significant at alpha 0/01. In other words, the more managers use avoidance style in conflict management process, human resources performance will be reduced in organization. Also the calculated coefficient of determination shows that the variable of avoidance style explains 0/21% of human resources performance variable variance.

4- Fourth hypothesis: there is a relationship between cooperation style in conflict management and human resources performance improvement (Table 6).

Table 6. Results of correlation test between the style of cooperation in conflict management and human resources performance improvement

Level of confidence	Direction of correlation	R Square (R) ²	Amount of correlation	Type of correlation	of variables
0.000	positive	0.18	0.435	Pearson	cooperation style with performance improvement

The results set forth in Table 6 show that there is a significant positive relationship ($r = 0.435$) between the two variables of avoidance and Human Resources performance improvement that this relationship is significant at alpha 0.01. In other words, the more managers use cooperation style in conflict management process, human resources performance will be improved in organization. Also the calculated coefficient of determination shows that the variable of cooperation style explains 0.18% of human resources performance variable variance.

5- Fifth hypothesis: there is a relationship between reconciliation style in conflict management and human resources performance improvement (Table 7).

Table 7. Results of correlation test between the style of reconciliation in conflict management and human resources performance improvement

Level of confidence	Direction of correlation	R Square (R) ²	Amount of correlation	Type of correlation	of variables
0.000	positive	0.26	0.518	Pearson	reconciliation style with performance improvement

The results set forth in Table 7 show that there is a significant positive relationship ($r = 0.518$) between the two variables of reconciliation and Human Resources performance improvement that this relationship is significant at alpha 0.01. In other words, the more managers use reconciliation style in conflict management process, human resources performance will be improved in organization. Also the calculated coefficient of determination shows that the variable of cooperation style explains 0.26% of human resources performance variable variance.

4. DISCUSSION

Conflict is a phenomenon that has positive and negative effects on individual’s performance in organizations correct and effective use of conflict lead to promotion of health and safety in organization and ineffective use of that would reduce performance and create conflict and convulsion in organizations. However, effective use of conflict requires knowledge and understanding of the full nature of the conflict and obtaining the skills to manage and control it which is the one of the most important management skills (Afarhangi, 1998.). In any case, the ability to deal with conflict and managing it has an excellent role in the success of managers. If conflicts are constructive lead to appearance of new and creative ideas and provide the ground for beneficial transition, change and innovation in organization and ultimately help managers to achieve their organizational goals and improve the quality of decision-making (Ahmadi et al, 2013). Fall of conflicts in a constructive and efficient way, largely depends on how the organization is and how deals with conflict. This means that if the conflict is effectively under the control and the manager take appropriate action towards that, this would increase the cohesion of the group or organization that itself creates the balance of power between opposition members and attracts them to compromise and coexistence, or leads them to the appropriate organizational changes. This organizational change and coexistence, develops the mentality of problem solving and getting used to it in the organization (Sorenson et al, 1995). The results in the present study showed that there is a significant positive relationship between the styles of cooperation, compromise and reconciliation in conflict management and human resources performance improvement and a significant negative relationship between the style of competitive and avoidance in conflict management and human resources performance improvement. Previous research suggests the relationship between the styles of conflict management

and human resources performance improvement in organizations: A researcher (Haidari, 2004) also showed that school administrators are more likely to use the strategy solution finding (cooperation and compromise) and lesser tend to apply the strategy of coercion. Researchers (Antonioni, 1998; Iranzade et al, 2013) showed that if the conflict be managed carefully and diligently to improve, will become an important tool in the development of organization. Researchers (Ahmadi et al, 2013) showed that there is a positive significant correlation between styles of reconciliation, cooperation and compromise in conflict management and organizational success and effectiveness. Researchers (Zand et al, 2008) showed that there is a positive relationship between emotional intelligence and cooperation style in conflict management and a negative correlation between emotional intelligence and avoidance style in conflict management. The results of another survey (Iranzade et al, 2013) showed that there is a positive correlation between the styles of reconciliation, cooperation and compromise in conflict management and creativity of staff. It also showed that there is a negative correlation between the style of coercion and creativity of staff. Researchers (Canary and Spitzber, 1998) also did the research to investigate the relationship between individual merit and conflict management. The results suggest that strategies based on creating unity (synergy) were positively correlated with individual merit. However, strategies based on avoidance and separation methods had a negative correlation with individual merit. A researcher (Ghorbani, 2000) in his study found the relationship between the styles of conflict management and school effectiveness. The results showed that of the three solution-oriented approach, avoidance and monitoring, solution-oriented approach is most correlated with the effectiveness of schools. A researcher (Seyad Ameri, 2010) showed in his research that there is a significant relationship between application of conflict management styles and job satisfaction and quality of the morale in sport coaches; therefore, according to effective ways to manage interpersonal conflict promotes job satisfaction and the moral of sport coaches working in the agency of the physical education. Researchers (Abbasi et al, 2010) in investigating the relationship between conflict management and efficiency, indicated that, there is a positive significant correlation between conflict management in solution-oriented approach and avoidance approach and a negative significant relationship between strategy of control and effectiveness. Researchers (Shahtalebi and Pardakhtchi, 2010) in their research showed that there is a positive significant correlation between emotional intelligence and cooperation style of conflict management and a negative significant correlation between emotional intelligence and avoidance style of conflict management. Researchers (Rafiee and Zahedi, 2013) in their research showed that in confidence level of 95% coordination between the human resources strategy, decision making strategy and cultural strategy leads to improve human resources performance improvement. Researchers (Ghahramani and Heidari, 2013) also showed in their research that there is a significant positive relationship between the health of bureaucracy system and human resources performance improvement.

Primarily in organizations, there are varying degrees of administrative levels and different managers at every level because of dealing with people and supervising employees in the area of control, every day are faced with conflicts are various challenges in their organizations. One of the most important characteristics of successful leaders, is the use of an appropriate strategy to deal with conflict and conflict-causing factors in the organization. Today management experts believe that human resources are the most important assets of an organization and a competitive advantage and the existence of healthy relationship based on cooperation and solidarity between these valuable resources is among the important fundamental factors for the success of all organizations including industrial, administrative, service, educational, and like them. On the other hand, due to the increasing complexity of organizations and differences in ideas, attitudes and beliefs of individuals, conflict is believed as an inevitable part of organizational life today. The remarkable thing is that the inevitability of conflict is not because of this being negative, but if it be managed well, be useful for the organization as well. In other words, conflict is the coin of the positive and negative sides and it is how to deal with it that will determine its effect for the organization. Hence, no doubt, the ability to manage and control the phenomenon of conflict in the organization is of the most important management skills that managers need to have today. Conflict is a phenomenon that has positive and negative effects on the performance of individuals and organizations. The correct and effective use of conflict would enhance the performance and health of the organization and its ineffective use would lead to reduce performance and create conflict and tension in the organization. Effective use of conflict requires knowledge and understanding of the full nature of the conflict, as well as of the creating factors and obtaining skills to manage and control it that today is regarded as one of the most important management skills. The ability to deal with conflict and manage it, has an excellent role in the success of managers. If the conflicts are beneficial, they may cause the appearance of new and creative ideas and provide the ground for beneficial transition, change and innovation in organization and finally helps the managers to achieve their organizational goals.

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