

“The Study of Impact Of Age On The Conflict Resolution Style Of The Employees”

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Abstract: Conflict management is the ability to be able to identify and handle conflicts sensibly, fairly, and efficiently. This paper highlights the impact of demographics like age, gender, years of experience on the conflict resolution style of employees. For the purpose of measuring the impact of demographics on the conflict management style, a sample of 30 respondents is selected. The sample is a fair representation of both the genders. The various factors of conflict resolution are put in a 5 point rating scale and then questionnaire is totalled and the most preferred style of conflict resolution is identified. The five conflict resolution styles are Accommodating, Avoiding, Compromising, Collaborating and Dominating. For the purpose of analysis, Two way Anova is used to reflect the impact of age on the conflict resolution style.

Keywords: Demographics. Conflict management Styles

❖ Introduction

Conflict is a common issue in our everyday lives. Caused by disagreement in goals, motivations, or actions between two parties that can be real or only perceived to exist, conflict is seen as a perceived incongruity of interests (Taylor and Moghaddam, 1994). Whether it results due to a difference of opinions, harsh words or direct action to solve competing goals, conflict has the potential to occur in many domains of our lives. Conflict is considered to be the normal and inevitable consequence of social and organizational life (Coser, 1956). Dahrendorf (1959) and Mosca (1939) claim further that no human society or social group exists that does not possess some conflict between the wishes or intent of individuals, while Kahn et al. (1964) state that “one might well make a case for interpreting some conflict as essential for the continued development of mature and competent human beings.”

Conflict typically has been viewed as an indication of organizational and interpersonal dysfunction. Mayo (1945) contends that organizations should attempt to avoid conflict wherever possible. The human relations movement, which emphasizes the potential personal and organizational costs of conflict, also believes conflict must be eliminated from the organizational setting (Kelly, 1970; Litterer, 1966).

There are conflict theorists, however, who believe that some degree of interpersonal and organizational conflict can serve useful functions (Lewis, 1976; O'Connor, 1978; Schmidt and Tannenbaum, 1960). Deutsch (1971) states that “conflict is often part of the process of testing and assessing one’s self and as such, may be highly enjoyable as one experiences the pleasure of full and active use of one’s capacities.”

Many factors such as high diversity, uncertain work environments and organizational interdependencies cause conflict in organizations (Amason, 1996; Amason et al., 1995; Jameson, 1999; Pondy, 1992; Wall and Callister, 1995). Since conflict is inevitable and accepted as a major facet of organizational life, conflict resolution within organizations is a topic that receives significant attention in the academic literature and in the professional environment (De Dreu and Weingart, 2003; Jameson, 1999; Jehn, 1997; Pearson et al., 2002; Rahim, 2000, 2001, 2002; Wall and Callister, 1995). As a result, conflict management has recently become a major subfield of organizational behavior.

This might be due to the trend that stresses the greater acceptance of conflict as an organizational phenomena, and as a result, concern over its management. Since there is a great need for workplace harmony and productivity (Chen and Tjosvold, 2002; Tjosvold and Sun, 2002), managing conflict is becoming vital. Although conflict traditionally has been considered to be destructive, De Dreu and Van de Vliert (1997) suggest that constructive conflicts may provide some positive outcomes, such as improving group creativity and effectiveness. A credible reason for the continuing interest in conflict management is that the ability to resolve conflicts is considered an important skill for managers (McKenna and Richardson, 1995). Some scholars (e.g., Cosier and Schwenk, 1990; Jehn, 1994; Priem et al., 1995) even believe that conflicts could be functional while

the quality of decisions would improve as a result of intense debate. Rahim (1992) indicates that organizational conflict is considered as a legitimate, inevitable, and possibly a positive indicator of effective organization management.

In spite of increasing interest in conflict management, the influence of demographic variables on conflict management has been overlooked. This study includes demographic variables such as age, gender position, tenure in the current organization. The relationship between these demographic variables and conflict management styles has been tested while these relationships are thought to be important for improving workplace relations.

❖ Conflict Management Styles

Conflicts happen. How an employee responds and resolves conflict will limit or enable that employee's success. Here are five conflict styles that a manager will follow according to Kenneth W. Thomas and Ralph H. Kilmann:

An **accommodating** manager is one who cooperates to a high degree. This may be at the manager's own expense and actually work against that manager's own goals, objectives, and desired outcomes. This approach is effective when the other person is the expert or has a better solution.

Avoiding an issue is one way a manager might attempt to resolve conflict. This type of conflict style does not help the other staff members reach their goals and does not help the manager who is avoiding the issue and cannot assertively pursue his or her own goals. However, this works well when the issue is trivial or when the manager has no chance of winning.

Collaborating managers become partners or pair up with each other to achieve both of their goals in this style. This is how managers break free of the win-lose paradigm and seek the win-win. This can be effective for complex scenarios where managers need to find a novel solution.

Competing: This is the win-lose approach. A manager is acting in a very assertive way to achieve his or her own goals without seeking to cooperate with other employees, and it may be at the expense of those other employees. This approach may be appropriate for emergencies when time is of the essence.

Compromising: This is the lose-lose scenario where neither person nor manager really achieves what they want. This requires a moderate level of assertiveness and cooperation. It may be appropriate for scenarios where you need a temporary solution or where both sides have equally important goals.

After reviewing the theoretical grounding and developing the research question related with demographic variables and conflict management styles, the research method utilized in this study will be explained detailing the instrument, sampling and the procedure. Then, the empirical results with a discussion of the findings will be elaborated. Finally, the managerial implications of the research will be presented.

❖ Literature Review

Workplace Conflict

Workplace conflict is defined in number of ways by authors. Obi (2012) defined workplace conflict as an act of dissatisfaction and disagreement by which employers or workers pressurise each other so that their demands can be fulfilled.

Henry (2009); Ikeda, Veludo and Campomar (2005); Azamoza (2004) and Ajala and Oghenekohwo (2002) define workplace conflict as when goals or interests of the individuals do not match with each other and give rise to a dispute.

On this ground, so as far as the workplace conflict is considered relations between employees are regarded as an unavoidable clash of welfares, objectives and goals which give rise to a dispute in an organization. Thus we can say that in the absence of morals and ethics in an organization, conflict is bound to occur.

Age and Conflict Styles

Various methods might be used for dealing with the conflict. This change in the method may be due to different factors such as culture, type of conflict, personality and demographics of the people involved in conflict (Kozan, 1997). Alterations in the cultural factors such as religion, geographical location and the cultural belief and standards are also recognized as some of the key reasons of the changes in conflict management styles (Kozan, 1997).

In the study by Çetin and Hacifazlioglu (2004), besides gender, experience, age, faculty it was found that subject variables also have an important roles in teachers' and academics' proper selection of styles of conflict management. Age was recognized as an important variable that can affect the styles of the conflict management. As academics and teachers grow in their age, they become more practical and productive in their communication with their peers. This was also shown by more numerous use of collaboration style by the older subjects.

A study is also done with Israeli nurse managers in general hospitals has come out with results that many of the demographic features were not correlated with the styles of the conflict management. Though the experience in the position has effect on collaborating choice in conflict management. The more experience a nurse head had in her job profile, the more frequent she resolve conflict with collaborating style of conflict management (Hendel et al., 2005).

Work-place Conflict Factors

Empirical research findings have put forth the reasons of causative factors of workplace. Hotepo, Asokere, Abdul – Azeez and Ajemunigbohun (2010) have found number of reasons such as lack of resources, different expectation, rivalry, lack of support, dependency with each other and and communication problems are the factors those are responsible for the conflicts in an organization.

Relatedly, in the banking sector in Nigeria, Obasan (2011) has acknowledged intolerable terms of employment, unhealthy relations between employees and management, no participation of employees in decision making affecting them, no support to union by management, and lack of policies for conflict resolution as various causal factors of workplace conflict.

A study is also conducted in the banking sector by Tsevendorj (2008) has given rating to failure of communication, employees' perception, morals and their cultural problems as a very important sources of conflict. So, most of the conflicts in organization have mismatch between economic and goal orientations in the workplace.

Workplace Conflict Types

Ogunbameru (2006) has distinguished workplace conflict into two types: informal and formal workplace conflicts. According to him, conflict will be informal when it is not related to any systematic organizational problem but rather is a result of sources of criticism and at the same time apparently can be expressed. In this regard the sources could not be visible, but can be result from unconscious form of dispute, disruption, disruptive behaviour and negligence to work by employees in an organizations. If the situation is suitably extensive, it can meaningfully affect employee job profile performance, turnover and impact on the progress of an organization (Kazimoto, 2013).

On the other side, formal workplace conflict means when conflicts are systematically expressed through representatives of workers or trade union (Ogunbameru, 2006). It is visible in nature, because it is intentionally done with strategy to change or modify employment relationship.

To sum all, Albert (2001) stated that we can see conflict in workplace with two angles, one is formal and the second one is informal, one is damaging and negative and the other one is fruitful and positive with a capacity to solve problem. Still, the circumstances for the two conflict are neither bad nor good, because differences and disappointment must happen in workplace so that steps could be taken to improve total workplace performance.

Workplace Conflict Management

According to Rahim (2002) conflict management is all about coming up with good and effective strategies so that the bad consequences of the conflict can be reduced and improve the productive functions in order to optimize knowledge and performance of an organization. It does not mean that conflict management suggests total avoidance or closure but decreasing those factors that do not contribute to the productivity of an organization. Conflict management is a technique by which management or organizations try to handle grievances or arguments in such a way so as to they can maximize the possibilities to reach to a particular resolution, work for good discussions and come up with good decisions.

As observed by Uchendu, Anijaobi and Odigwe (2013), as conflict is unavoidable in organizations, so the responsibilities goes to management to take decision whether it will be healthy or unhealthy to an organizational performance. So it becomes necessary to identify underlying pressure as soon as possible and come up with a good clarification for managing conflict in the workplace before the conflict becomes more critical and will be beyond the capacity of the management.

Therefore conflict management is a very prominent process and it can be implemented in an organization by different methods. Ford (2007) postulated four way process which involves assessment and inquiry, design, implementation and evaluation, these processes focus is on accomplishing successful and impartial conflict decision in the workplace. This kind of collective approach is frequently implemented to motivate management to resolve stakeholder's conflict and fulfil their needs. Vigil and King (2000) has observed that managing conflict with collective styles of processes is more productive and create sophisticated commitment in single one than group using non-collective conflict management. The collective approach gives more insight into understanding conflict problem and their solution.

Like same manner, collective negotiating strategies are also advised as a method for resolving union and management conflict in organization. This kind of method is applauded internationally as the authorised mechanism for resolving conflict arising from management and employee dispute (Fajana and Shadare, 2012). In this way this joint approach of managing conflict includes intervention between union and management to fulfil demands and come out with a solution of agreement among them.

❖ **Objectives**

- To study about conflict management in an organization.
- To find out different conflict management styles adopted by employees?
- To find out the relation between age and conflict management styles.

❖ **Hypothesis**

Ho: Age has no significant impact on the conflict styles of employees.

H1: Age has significant impact on the conflict styles of employees.

❖ **Research Methodology:**

1. Type of Research

- Research type will be exploratory research.

2. Method of Data Collection

Primary data

1. Structured Questionnaire method.
2. In-depth Interview method.

Secondary data

1. Magazines, Business Journals.
2. Government website and other website.

3. Sample Design

Geographical area/ Universe:

Nagpur City is considered for study.

Sampling Unit:

The units are employees working in a WCL organization in Nagpur City.

Sampling Method:

For this research probability sampling is used.

The design of the sample is as follows:

- Type of the probability sampling: - Simple Random Sampling.
- Sample Size: - 30 employees.

4. Tools Used

- Five Point Rating scale is used for getting response.
- One way ANOVA is used for variance.

❖ **Data Analysis and Interpretation**

Appropriate statistical analysis is adopted. The data is tabulated and analyzed. Data received through questionnaire is first tabulated and then statistical formulas is used for each kind of data. One-way ANOVA is used to determine whether there are any significant differences between the means of several independent groups. Age group is taken as independent factor and impact is found out by one way ANOVA.

Table 1: One way ANOVA

Anova: Single Factor

SUMMARY					
Groups	Count	Sum	Average	Variance	
Age	30	56	1.866667	0.602299	
Collaborating	30	40	1.333333	0.229885	
Accommodating	30	59	1.966667	0.722989	
Competing	30	97	3.233333	0.667816	

Avoiding	30	91	3.033333	1.61954
Compromising	30	61	2.033333	0.791954

ANOVA

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	P-value	F crit
Between Groups	80.844444	5	16.16889	20.93294	2.37E-16	2.266062
Within Groups	134.4	174	0.772414			
Total	215.24444	179				

From the above table it can be observed that $20.93294 > 2.266062$. Therefore we reject the null hypothesis and accept alternate hypothesis.

❖ Findings and Conclusions

After applying one way ANNOVA given in table1 it is clear that null hypothesis is rejected and alternate hypothesis is accepted.

So, Age has significant impact on the conflict styles of employees. Age and conflict management styles are related with each other. Employees' conflict styles differ according to age. The five conflict styles are collaborating, accommodating, competing, avoiding and compromising. Depending upon the age, employees select their conflict management styles.

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