

Conflict Management in the 4.0 Industrial Revolution

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Abstract: In organizations few things are predictable, but one thing that is a guarantee is that there will always be conflict. What is important is not avoiding conflict, but instead managing conflict as it arises. Conflict management is the process of limiting the negative aspects of conflict while increasing the positive aspects of the conflict. Each style has its pros and cons. It is important to know which type of management style to use, depending on what type of conflict has arisen. 11 academic journals were analyzed to show all the different aspects of conflict management and how they all affect each other. Conflict management has much strength, and also contains some limitations that must be overcome in order to solve conflict successfully. Finally, theoretical and practical contributions are discussed, including essential components for creating good conflict management programs.

1 INTRODUCTION

Every day in life we face conflicts. Conflicts occur in many ways, such as a conflict between family, friends, colleagues, institutions, and between ourselves. Some conflicts are destructive while some others are constructive. Conflict is best defined as the by-product of inconsistent or incompatible perceptions and expectations regarding what it is, what could be, or what should be (Robin, 2014).

In organizational setting, conflicts are a pervasive fact of organization life; whenever people need to work together conflicts are likely to emerge. Conflicts may occur between co-workers, an employee and supervisor, teams and division, or on the inter-organizational level (Ayoko et al., 2014). Research on conflict management shows that the way conflict is managed in the workplace impacts the process and outcomes of conflict, both for individuals and for organizations (Trudel & Reio, 2011). Poorly managed workplace or organizational conflict affects the level and frequency of future conflict and has a negative effect on employee learning, productivity, and job performance (Trudel & Reio, 2011).

In the workplace, even minor arguments and disputes can take a toll on individual careers, personal health, relationships, teamwork, and overall productivity. Conflict can sour the climate of the organization, undermine morale, interfere with

performance, or erupt into dangerous and violent confrontations. According to Robin (2014) “conflicts can cause loyal, valuable employees to become alienated, forcing voluntary or involuntary terminations. Various studies from the fields of management and human resources maintain that supervisors and managers spend 18-25 percent of their time on conflict management. Additionally, costs in production, employee turnover, sick time, and conflict-related absenteeism take an additional toll.”

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

There are five types of conflict management styles: (1) integrating (collaborating or problem-solving), (2) dominating (competing or forcing), (3) accommodating (obliging), (4) avoiding, and (5) compromising. Trudel & Reio (2011), Robin (2014). According to Trudel & Rio (2011) “integrating style is indicative of a high level of concern for both one’s goals and others’ goals in conflict. This style involves a problem-solving orientation and a willingness to explore and work with the other person to find options that will be mutually acceptable and maximize joint gains. Openness and exchange of information characterize the style. The dominating style reflects a high concern for one’s goals along with a low concern for others’ goals.

This style is evidenced by a win–lose orientation with attempts to accomplish objectives without an account of the other person’s needs. The accommodating style involves a low level of concern for one’s goals but a high concern for others’ goals. A person who attempts to minimize differences by giving in to the other person and not expressing his or her own concerns manifests this style. The avoiding style is associated with having low concern for both one’s goals and others’ goals. It is characterized by attempts to withdraw, deny, and disengage from a conflict situation. Changing the topic or making irrelevant remarks are efforts to avoid conflict. Compromising indicates a moderate concern for one’s goals and others’ goals. It is evidenced by a give-and-take approach, seeking middle ground through each person’s giving up something to reach a solution.”

Among all those styles, the integrating style is considered to be the most constructive. Research indicates that styles of conflict and levels of conflict were found to be significantly related to individual job satisfaction, with the integrating and compromising styles being positively related to interpersonal outcomes, while dominating, accommodating, and avoiding styles negatively related to interpersonal outcomes (Trudel & Rio, 2011).

According to Tinsley & Brett (2001) “Conflict may be managed by (1) Joint decision Making; (2) Third-party decision making; (3) Separate action, including unilateral behaviours such as retreat, withdrawal and tacit coordination.” There is a misleading stereotype stated that successful leaders have long been thought to make tough decisions and then use their power to enforce compliance (Tjosvold, 2014). Discussions among people with a diverse perspective very much contributes to making high -quality decisions, as conventional thinking is challenged, threats and opportunities are identified, and new solutions are forged. Even in a crisis, leaders are typically more effective when they seek out diverse views. According to (Tjosvold, 2014) “rather than making tough decisions alone, effective leaders are oriented toward promoting the conditions and relationships for open-minded discussion of opposing views among colleagues and employees”. Leaders with different kinds of styles are effective the more they develop teamwork, specifically cooperative conflict management among followers. Transformational leaders were found effective not by unilaterally directing employees but by helping employees manage their conflicts cooperatively and constructively. Government officials who exercised

transformational leadership promoted cooperative conflict management that in turn resulted in strong government–business partnerships. Leaders who valued productivity and people fostered team effectiveness by encouraging open-minded discussion among team members.

3 RESEARCH METHOD

This study seeks to explore how conflict management is being operated in the era of 4.0 industrial revolution. The authors employ a literature review in doing this study. To address the research questions, the authors have limited the search to the following criteria: (1) Articles that were published in academic journals (2) Used internet, youth, parenting, digital parenting, social media, character education as the keywords, (3) Used qualitative, quantitative or literature review as their method, (5) Published in 2009-2019. The last criterion was chosen under the assumption that there were massive research that has been conducted on these issues. Therefore, we tend to analyze the most updated ones.

4 RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Conflict Management is obviously very important to a company. “Poorly managed workplace or organizational conflict affects the level and frequency of future conflict and has a negative effect on employee learning, productivity and job performance” (Trudel & Reio, 2011). There are many strengths when trying to manage conflict, however, there are also limitations in conflict management that will slow down the process.

One major strength in conflict management is that there is a plethora of choices when it comes to choosing which style you are going to use. As we discussed, there are five types of conflict management styles: integrating, dominating, accommodating, avoiding, and compromising. There are various types of conflict that will arise in the workplace, and if you use the same style of conflict management for every conflict, only a few of the conflicts will be successfully secured. Having so many choices of management ensures that there is always a right option and there will almost always be a way to solve the conflict, no matter how unique or different that problem is. While this is definitely a big strength in managing conflict, it also can

become quite the limitation. There are so many choices of management styles that it can become confusing which style should be chosen based on the respective conflict. According to Trudel & Reio (2011) “the manner in which conflicts were managed (as determined through the preferred conflict style) predicted the likelihood of uncivil behavior.” This shows that it is very important to choose the right style because it is connected to the wellness of the behavior in the office. It is imperative that we realize that sometimes the style is the complete reason for workplace problems. In research done by Trudel & Reio (2011), their findings suggest that conflict management style may both be an antecedent and antidote to workplace incivility.” It’s displayed that a dominating approach predicts great frequent of incivility and the integrative approach can have a much better result on relationships. After reading the research results, one might altogether stop using a dominating approach and use integrative styles much more often, however, this is where having a variety of conflict management styles can become a limitation. These results do not mean abandon dominating and only use integrative styles, it simply shows that there are more conflicts that are resolved by the integrative approach, and only to use the dominating conflict style when you absolutely know it is the right move. Overall, we have seen that there are many types of conflict and various people involved in said conflict. It is great to have so many conflict management styles so that we can choose the one that fits perfectly, but with so many choices we have to be extra careful to choose the right one, or risk causing the workplace incivility in the first place.

A big limitation of conflict management is that conflict is never -ending. In the article “Applying conflict management research” it is explained that conflict is common in teamwork, in leadership, and indeed in many areas within and between organizations” (Tjosvold, 2014). This means that as soon as one conflict has been subdued effectively by management it is almost certain that there is another conflict right around the corner. This limitation, however, shows how important an effective conflict management system is. With conflict always on the horizon, any moment of weakness could be detrimental to an organization and its employees.

With all this conflict, a strong organization must strive to find the strength that lies inside the limitation. Tjosvold (2014) explains, “Researchers have documented that conflict is potentially valuable as well as ubiquitous in organizations”. This is significant because some people may say that the

best way to solve conflict is to make sure there is none in the first place, but that would be dead wrong. “Research suggests that managing conflict can contribute to the important reviewing goals of high -quality publication decisions and developing the motivation and capabilities of researchers and reviewers.” (Tjosvold 2014). Conflict is a great moderm for good development within an organization. The article tells of a story where employees disagreed about how to apply new information systems. Employees and managers then restructured into newer workgroups that we’re able to discuss their differences open-mindedly. Together, these teams, along with top management actually developed their company’s new strategic advantages. There is a very fine line when accepting conflict into an organization. Conflict can “disrupt solving problems and learning” but if managed well and in a normal quantity, discussing conflict openly can help deal with biases and contribute to making high -quality decisions (Tjosvold, 2014).

Another strength of conflict management is results that come from it. Conflict Management systems can bring a lot to the table if run correctly. According to the article “Do conflict management systems matter?” by William Rochel& Paul Teague, (2012) “Conflict management systems are seen as contributing to such employer outcomes as improved productivity”. The article also goes on to say these systems dramatically reduce the cost of conflict management to improve employment relations and give a sense of organizational morale and loyalty. The advantageous outcomes keep rolling as they say “Employees outcome associated with conflict management systems include perceptions of procedural justice, satisfaction with outcomes as well as procedures, a better capacity to resolve destructive conflict, higher work satisfaction, higher organizational identification and commitment, more productive working” (Roche & Teague 2012). As you can see, conflict management systems have a ton of benefits if implemented correctly and efficiently.

One thing people might not think about is conflict management that involves teams composed of people in different countries. According to “Getting it together: Temporal Coordination and Conflict Management in Global Virtual Teams”(Montoya- Wiess, Massey, Song 2001) “New pressures Facing organizations have many to the use of global virtual teams”. A big strength in the conflict management process is something called temporal coordination mechanisms. These mechanisms are “a process structure imposed to

intervene and direct the pattern, timing and content of communication in a group and we expect temporal coordination to affect the causes and consequences of virtual team conflict” (Montoya-Wiess, Massey, Song 2001). As we discussed earlier, there are five types of conflict management styles, however, in virtual teams these behaviors would have different effect on performance. With this temporal coordination, we are able to “moderate these effects” (Montoya- Wiess, Massey, Song 2001) and thus conflict management is even strong when these teams are not even in the same country.

As it is illustrated, there is a lot that goes into conflict management, and with a subject so broad there is are bound to be many strengths and weaknesses that go along with that. What is important is not to simply dwell on the strengths and work around the limitations, but use strengths to break through your limitations. With so many styles, and the confusion that may come with it, work your hardest to create a training program that makes it crystal clear what style to use in what situation. With so much conflict being a limitation that makes it seem like there is no end, you must make sure you make it clear that conflict is not a bad thing. Conflict is useful in building stronger relationships and innovating new ways of solving problems. It is all about mentality when looking at your limitations, and mentality can make a world of difference.

5 CONCLUSION

Wherever there are people, there always will be conflict (Olu, 2014). As discussed above, conflict is a never-ending issue; however, it is meaningful to build stronger relationships in an innovative method while conflict management is taking place. Conflict management is the ability to be able to identify and handle conflicts sensibly, fairly, and efficiently. As future Human Resource Development (HRD) and Training and Development (T&D) practitioners, we have to deal with conflict in the workplace every day. The most important thing is to not only know what conflict management is about but also to have the capability to identify problems among colleagues and to assist them in overcoming and solving the problems. By doing so, we have to know the significance, effect, and consequence of conflict management in HRD and T&D fields.

People’s issues are much more important than technique issues in business settings. With a Human Resource Development (HRD) perspective, the HRD practitioners have to understand the

significance of conflict management because it plays a very important role at workplaces to prevent conflicts in order for the employees to concentrate on their work (Olu, 2014). Nothing productive will ever come out if the employees are constantly engaged in conflict with each other. In order to motivate employees, HRD practitioners are required to know employees’ strengths and weaknesses, as well as to understand their needs both at work and outside of the workplace (Olu, 2014). This way, employees would feel more supportive and have more motivation for commitment to the organization. It is always the key to motivate employees to one hundred percent of work efficiency to ensure maximum productivity. No organization runs for charity and it has to make money to survive well.

Conflict management goes a long way in strengthening the bond among employees and minimizes the problems, and eventually closes the gap among them (Kehinde, 2011). HRD practitioners should know individual differences such as gender, race, age, personality, capability and believe that everyone is unique with his or her own strengths and limitation. So, it is critical to create a welcoming and open-mind work environment that makes everyone feel motivated at work and feel free to share any new ideas. Before implementing new ideas, it must be discussed with everyone, and no one should ever feel ignored or left out. This way, every employee feels indispensable for the organization and thus strives hard to meet the expectations of his or her colleagues and to contribute to the organization in the best possible way.

In the era of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, it is essential to train employees and even leaders about conflict management skills. People tend to view conflict as a negative force operating against successful completion of a group or common goals; however, conflict can create a negative impact to group but may also lead to positive effects depending on the nature of the conflict (Kehinde, 2011). Conflict management skills help to find a middle way to solve existing problems and successfully implant new ideas for teamwork. As we mentioned earlier, there are five conflict management styles that are integrating, dominating, accommodating, avoiding, and compromising. There are also different kinds of conflict that will arise in the workplace. Problems must be addressed at the right time with appropriate conflict management style or skill to prevent conflict and its adverse effects at a later stage. Through conflict

management skills, employees have the opportunities to explore all the possible reasons to consider which might cause a big issue and try to resolve it in a timely manner. Conflict is not always a bad thing. Through conflict management training and practice, employees will build a healthy relationship within the team. They will feel motivated, open-minded, less stress, happy which made the world definitely becomes a better place to stay and commitment as a result of conflict management.

Furthermore, we have to know that conflict is bound to happen in the workplace. Whether it is functional or dysfunctional (Olu, 2014), the impact of conflict can be far-reaching. There are potential positive consequences of functional conflict arise in the workplace such as leading to new ideas, stimulating creativity, motivating changes, helping employees and groups establish identities, and leading better communications. Functional conflict is more likely to yields positive consequences. It can create trust among employees and within the organization as a whole. Employees can learn and grow from each experience through functional conflict. Moreover, employees are able to express their thoughts or opinions in a stress-free manner, which is critical for open and effective communication. Through functional conflict, employees could not only build a supportive network but also create a positive interpersonal relationship with each other.

On the other hand, however, there are also possible negative consequences of dysfunctional conflict such as diverting energy from work, lowering moral, wasting resources, creating negative climate, breaking down group cohesion, and increasing aggressive behaviors. Dysfunctional conflict often resulted in reducing morale, self-esteem, and motivation. This negative conflict is more likely to wedge barriers between individuals, groups, hindering customer service, creating negative communication and relationship, which limits work efficacy as well as an organization's development. As a HRD or T&D practitioner, the keys are to allow healthy conflict to play out and resolving negative conflict without damaging employees and the organization.

With what has been illustrated through the research, conflict management as an Organization Development (OD) and Training and Development (T&D) tool has a significant impact on employee's and leaders' work effectiveness and organizational development. Duke (1999) observed that conflict could arise between individuals or groups in an

organization if the goals are not specified or when the management shift blame on all. OD and T&D practitioners, holding a positive attitude toward conflict is always the first step to find out a solution. With a positive attitude, most of the negative conflicts can be managed, resolved, or even transferred into a positive force. We could also increase knowledge of differences between employees and leaders in term of cultural attitudes and conflict management styles. The second step is for all the members to learn skills and techniques to communicate more effectively and focus on the issue rather than personalities. Not all conflicts are bad and not all conflicts are good. Hence, management are duty-bound to resolve conflicts for the sake of increasing organizational performance, because the results of successful conflict management will result to good communication, time management, good cooperation and increases organizational performance (Kehinde, 2011)

In conclusion, conflict is an everyday phenomenon in each organization (Olu, 2014). It is a natural part of interacting with others. For an organization to grow effectively and efficiently it depends on the way it manages the conflict within its organization (Olu, 2014). Quite often, conflict arises out of opposing goals, values, and needs. One important task of conflict management is to create an environment in which individuals and groups of people can cooperate with one another to achieve their goals and the goals of the organization as a whole (Olu, 2014). With what we have discussed in this paper, we have gained a better understanding and more knowledge about the theoretic foundation, strength and limitation, impact, and application of conflict management. A well-conceived Conflict Management System provides qualified assistance early in the conflict cycle. It serves as an effective and invaluable Training Development and Organizational Development tool which can be utilized to stimulate employees' motivation, build a positive network among employees, improve work productivity, and thus to enhance the organization's development and long-term growth.

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