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The Impact of Organizational Culture and Job Related Affective Well Being on Employees' Conflict Resolution Styles

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Extensive Summary

Introduction

Modern management theorists today maintain that conflict can produce positive outcomes for an organization if managed effectively (Rahim, 2002). Due to "the growing complexity of organizations, use of teams and decision making, and globalization" (Lang, 2009, p. 240), effective conflict management has become an important issue for organizations which aim to enhance learning, individual and group outcomes as well as organizational performance.

Conflict management is defined as "behavior oriented toward the intensification, reduction, and resolution of the tension" (De Dreu, Harinck, Van Vianen, 1999, p. 371). Overall conflict management aims to minimize emotional conflicts at all levels, attain and maintain a moderate amount of task and process conflict, and raise or lower the conflict to an optimum level by utilizing the appropriate conflict management styles.

Conflict resolution has been the focus of considerable attention for decades. Rahim (2002) suggests that people may select from five styles in resolving conflicts:

• Avoiding: Individuals simply ignore or deny that no actual or potential disagreement really exists, or hope that it will disappear on its own.

• Accomodating: It means making unilateral concessions and giving in to the other's wishes without attending to one's own.

• Forcing/Competing: Goals are achieved by formal or informal positional power and at the expense of others.

• Compromising: Parties proceed with a 'give-and-take' attitude by giving up some of their assertions. There is no full achievement of desires but mutual goals are promoted for mutual benefits.

• Problem solving/Collaboration: Parties have a desire to fully satisfy both own and other's wishes. They focus on problem solving and generate the best possible solution for both parties.

In this study, we assumed that both contextual and personal factors will play a role in one's approach to conflict resolution strategies. For example, Putnam and Wilson (1982) argued that an individual's choice of conflict management can be influenced by the structure of the organization as well as one's position in that organization. The selection of a strategy to conflict resolution also depends on the culture of the organization – the shared beliefs and values guiding the thinking and behavioral styles of employees. Organizational culture has been defined by the two styles of the Organizational Culture Inventory: *Cooperative* (Humanistic-Helpful) and *Competitive* (Cooke and Rousseau, 1998). In a cooperative-Humanistic culture, members are expected to be supportive and constructive helping each other to grow. In a competitive culture, winning is important and members are rewarded for outperforming others. Thus,

We hypothesized that

H1: *There is a significant positive relationship between cooperative organizational culture and problem solving and comprimising conflict resolution styles.*

H2: *There is a significant positive relationship between competitive organizational culture and forcing, accomodating and avoiding conflict resolution styles.*

We assumed that dispositions can influence and predict the formation of attitudes and behaviors within organizations. Waltman and Wilson (1986) also asserted that an individual's approach to conflict may be a function of dispositional traits. This study focuses on *positive* and *negative job related affective well being* as a dispositional variable (Katwyk, et. al., 2000). Individuals with positive job related affective wellbeing will experience emotions such as happiness, excitement, and delight and associate them with pleasurable evaluations of events, people and work situations. Job-related negative emotions, on the other hand, such as anger, hostility, fear, and disgust are related to unpleasant events, people and work situations. Thus, we hypothesized that

H1: *There is a significant positive relationship between positive job related affective well being and problem solving and comprimising conflict resolution styles.*

H2: *There is a significant positive relationship between negative job related affective well being and forcing, accomodating and avoiding conflict resolution styles.*

Method

Sample: Participants were a convenience sample of 236 white collar employees from different industries at the private sector. The analyses were conducted on 104 women and 122 men. The avarage age of the participants was 27,4 and the avarage organizational tenure was 7,7 years. %64.2 of the participants were university graduates (N=150).

Instruments and Procedure: Participants completed "Conflict Resolution Styles Survey" (Kuşçuluoğlu, 2004); Organizational Culture Inventory: *Cooperative* (Humanistic-Helpful) and *Competitive* Styles Survey (Cooke and Rousseau, 1998) and "Job Related Affective Well Being Scale" (Katwyk et. al., 2000). The items were rated on a 6-point Likert scale ranging from 1=Strongly disagree/or Never; to 6=Strongly agree/Very often. Surveys were sent to the participants' e-mail addresses.

Findings

In general, the Cronbach α values of the instruments used in the study ranged from α= ,96 to α=,73 providing confidence that the instruments are reliable.

The factor analysis of the Conflict Resolution Styles Survey produced 4 factors: Problem- solving and Comprimising collapsed into one factor, which we named "Problem solving& Comprimising". "Forcing","Avoiding", and "Accommodating" were the other factors. As to the preferred conflict management styles, we can see a clear preference for *problem solving&comprimising* style (X=4,09) and a secondary preference for *forcing* (X=3,27), followed by *accommodating* (X=2,91) and *avoiding* style (X=2,82).

Pearson correlation analysis showed that Colloborative organization culture had positive correlations with Problem-Solving & Compromising (r=,72) and Accommodating style (r= ,30) while negative correlations with Forcing (r= -,48) and Avoiding style (r = -,56). Competitive organization culture correlates positively with Forcing (r= ,57) and Avoiding(r= ,54) while negatively with Problem-Solving&Compromising (r= -,54).

Positive Job Related Affective Well Being had positive correlations with Problem-Solving&Compromising (r= ,68) and Accommodating style (r= ,32) while negative correlations with Forcing (r= -,41) and Avoiding (r= -,41). Negative Job Related Affective Well Being correlates negatively with Problem-Solving&Compromising (r= -,57) and Accommodating style (r= -,21) while positively with Forcing (r= ,59) and Avoiding (r= ,61).

In order to find out the joint impact of the variables on the conflict resolution styles, we conducted regression analyses. Results showed that Collaborative Organizational Culture and Positive Job Related Affective Well Being had positive contributions on *Problem-Solving& Compromising* style (relatively β=,441 ve β=,386) while the contribution of Competitive Organizational Culture is negative (β=-,222).

Competitive Organizational Culture and Negative Job Related Affective Well Being had positive contributions on *Forcing* style (relatively β=,302 ve β=,478).

Negative Job Related Affective Well Being, Positive Job Related Affective Well Being and Competitive Organizational Culture had positive contributions on *Avoiding* style (relatively β=,526; β=,353; β=,212) while the contribution of Colloborative Organizational Culture is negative (β= -, 357).

Positive Job Related Affective Well Being and Colloborative Organizational Culture had positive contributions on *Accommodating* style (relatively β=,359 ve β=,290).

Discussion

The results suggest that Turkish people tend to approach the conflict situations in a confrontational rather than non-confrontational way. Being accommodating and avoiding the second and third choice also implies that Turkish people may not try to avoid conflicts or sacrifice themselves only for the sake of relationship building, as many have expected from a collectivistic culture. This might be due to the fact that Turkish culture is a mixture of Eastern and Western values (Aycan, 2001).

The positive contributions of a Collaborative Organizational Culture and Positive Job Related Affective Well Being on *Problem-Solving&Compromising* style implies that it is important to develop an organizational culture where members listen, cooperate, care for and help each other to grow. The negative contribution of a Competitive Organizational Culture draws attention to the importance of managing competition in organizations carefully. Similarly, it is important to have employees with

a positive job related affective wellness as they seem to take a positive approach to conflict resolution focusing on the problem in a win-win fashion. As Gross and Guerrero (2000) claims problem-solving approach is the most effective and satisfying solution in resolving conflict situations.