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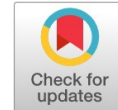
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# INTERACTION BETWEEN COMMUNICATION AND ORGANIZATIONAL CONFLICT AND ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH PERFORMANCE

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## Keywords:

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**Abstract.** Improving organizational performance is one of the most important goals that organizations try to achieve in growth, profitability, increasing market share, productivity, and other criteria. The core objective of the current paper is to examine the interactional relationship among organizational communication, organizational conflict, and performance. The institutions (under supervision of ministry of science, research and technology) were selected as statistical population. The descriptive research method was used for conducting this research. Two questionnaires were designed and distributed among sample institutions (using convenient sampling). The information of 22 institutions (188 questionnaires) was gathered and used for analysis. The results indicate a significant association between organizational communication, organizational conflict, and performance.

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## INTRODUCTION

Organizations total depends upon communication i.e messages, exchange of ideas and information provision via speech, signals, writings and messages. Organizations cannot work well without communication. In case of communication withdrawing, whole organization suffers loss. Moreover, in case of effective, accurate, and timely communications, organization becomes vibrant & effective. Nothing is more important but communication is considered as important instrument. Communication is considered as “the heart of every business activity”. This is known as string that joins projects of individuals and organization with its desired objectives. Communication is only key, that enables employees to share their ideas, objectives, and needs (Benowitz, 2001, p. 159).

Effective performance of organizations also depends upon the quality of communication. Managers are required to communicate with the subordinates plus superiors. They utilize more than 75% of time in dealing and communication. Communication not only provides life to organizational structure but also known as thread that joint all units with sub units, processes with systems and culture together. Organization will close down if communications stops working.

Communication is also considered as important for worldwide existence of the organization because mostly organizations communicate with external organizations and agencies in order to incorporate various inputs for its survival and growth.

Similarly, communications not only convey internal information but also provid information obtained from environment to diverse departments groups and individuals.

An effective communication represents efficiencies and capabilities of a successful manager; because with growth of organization, role of communication becomes more important. Consequently, there is need for improvement in communication system according to nature, size, performance and location of the organization (Kondalkar, 2007, p. 193).

Jain (1973) explored the association between the effective communication of hospital managerial personnel and their performance as supposed by subordinate workers. Significant correlations were found between perceived communication behavior and ratings of supervisory performance, except for those ratings given by technicians in one of the hospitals. Goodnight, Cray, Balthrop and Hazen (1974) found only a .02 correlation between overall communication satisfaction and productivity in a study of management level personnel and the subordinates within a large Midwestern corporation. In a study examining employees in six manufacturing and service organizations, Jenkins found a correlation between supervisory communicative effectiveness and worker performance (cited in Hellweg & Phillips, 1982).

One of the most important phenomena in workplace is conflict. The existence of conflict can hinder organizational effectiveness.

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However managers and organizational researchers have a little information about managing conflict and its related problems. Some argue that the causes of conflict are organizational structure, resource shortage; incompatible goals and others state that communication is a key factor in creating and solving conflict (e.g., Moore, 2007; Stockwell, 1997).

The study of Mohr and Spekman (1994) indicated that quality of communication and proper use of conflict handling style can affect partnership success. Their findings demonstrate that partnership success has following primary characteristics; partnership aspect towards commitment, coordination and trust. We can't banish conflict from our lives, but we can communicate more effectively through it. Despite the importance of using effective communication in managing and solving conflict in organization, there are little studies in this area and there is no research that examines the interactive relationship between organizational communication and conflict and its relationship with performance. So the basic question of current research is; To analyze existence of significant association between organizational communication, conflict and its relationship with performance.

**Objective of the Study**

The current study aimed at investigating the relationship between organizational communication and conflict and performance.

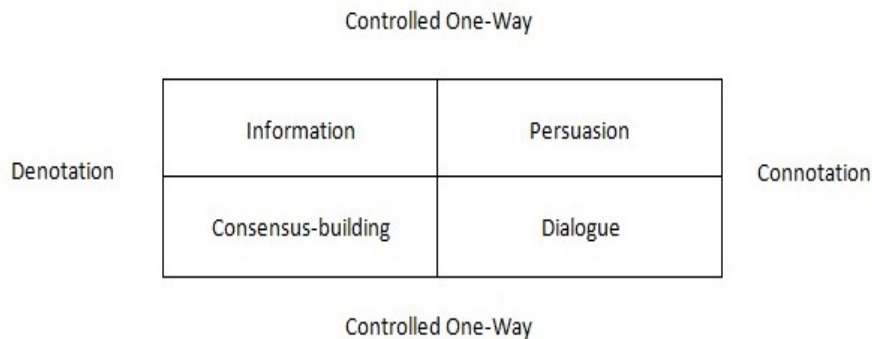
**LITERATURE REVIEW**

**Organizational Communication Typology**

Grunig's models (1992) of "public relations" showed "first classification of insights into communication". Grunig (1992) reputed PR models and these models (PR) stress upon not only one way communication but also give emphasis upon two way models. In his current work, Grunig (2001) claimed one way models as symmetric, because sender has concerned only with a transmission of his message and don't think about the receiver messages. Grunig (2001) indicated two way models as symmetrical plus a-symmetrical in his up to dated publications (Van Ruler, 2004).

Van Ruler (2004) introduced four types of organizational communications as a communication grid that shown in figure 1.

**FIGURE 1**  
**Types of Organizational Communication**



Source: (Van Ruler, 2004; 139)

The square bounded by monitored one-way traffic and the denotative side of meaning provides the information strategy (Van Ruler, 2004, p. 139). Press releases and public relations materials are often made just to inform. The strategy demands a well-rounded policy (since there has to be a clear message), an informative message, and an aware, information seeking public (Grunig & Hunt, 1984).

The square bounded by monitored one-way traffic and the connotative side of meaning provides the persuasion strategy (Van Ruler, 2004; 140). This is known as foundation of "advertising and propaganda". Another approach that applies on this

square is corporate communication for sake of "presenting the organization" as well as for generating sympathetic foundation for additional dealings with "pertinent stakeholders" (cf. Van Riel, 1995). The strategy demands a well-rounded policy, a persuasive message, and a latent public (Perlof, 1993).

The square bounded by two-way traffic and the connotative side of meaning provides the dialogue strategy (Van Ruler, 2004; 140). This is facilitating strategy in "interactive policy making" and "socially responsible enterprising". This strategy can also be utilized for three purposes; "Effectual management of job negotiations, small scale brainstorming to identify particular

problems, collecting possible solutions of all problems” (Senge, 1990).

This strategy is in line with “1st phase of interactive policy development and decision making”. Moreover, square surrounded through “two-way traffic” and “denotative side of meaning” provides the “consensus building strategy” (Van Ruler, 2004; 140). This strategy acts as bridges formulation of bridges between “organization, environment and employees” (Dozier, 1992). This strategy is in line with “1st phase of interactive policy development and decision making”. This strategy supports “active public” and “clear negotiations” in policy making of organization (Grunig, 1992).

**Organizational Conflict Typology**

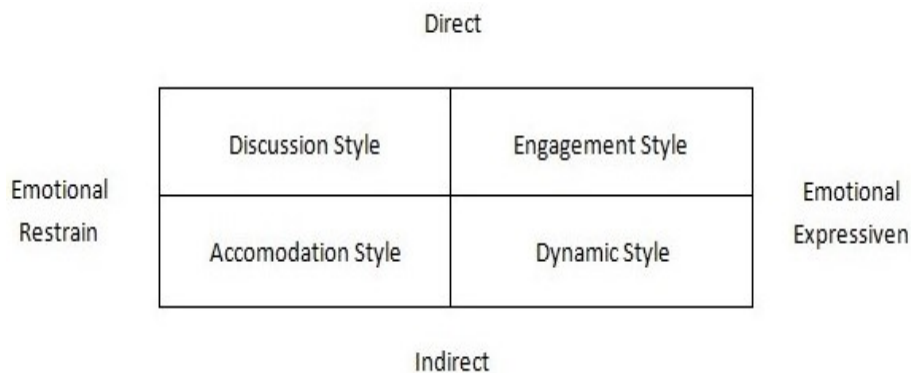
When different social groups initiate to deal with each other, in order to obtain their goals; then sometimes their dealings turn out to be divergent because;

- Some of members want “a similar resource that is in short supply”.
- Members encompass moderately limited choices related to joint action.
- They contain diverse approaches, thinking and expertise. “Conflict is the perception of differences of interests among people” (Thompson, 1998, p. 4).

There are multiple models for conflict handling. Firstly, Deutsch

(1949) suggested simple “cooperativecompetitive” model to deal social conflict. Putnam and Wilson (1982) presented empirical evidence of conflict on base of items factor analysis of their “Organizational Communication Conflict Instrument” and three methods to handle interpersonal conflict i.e. non confrontations (obliging), solution-orientation (integrating) and control (dominating). Pruitt (1983) also provided several empirical evidences from laboratory studies and concluded that there are four ways of handling conflict; i) yielding ii) problem solving, iii) inaction iv) contending. Follett (1940) introduced five styles model to handle “interpersonal conflict in organizations” 1926. She introduced three main ways of handling organizational conflicts i.e., “domination, compromise and integration”. Likewise, other secondary methods to handle conflicts e.g., “avoidance and suppression”. Rahim (1983); Rahim and Bonoma (1979) differentiated various styles of handling interpersonal conflict on two basis of two dimensions: i.e., “concern for self, concern for others”; While these styles are following; i) integrating style, ii) obliging style iii) dominating style iii) avoiding style iv) compromising style (Rahim, 2001, pp. 24-30). Hammer (2005) in his research developed the “Intercultural Conflict Style (ICS)” inventory models on basis of two central proportions i.e., direct and indirect proportions for resolving issues of emotional inconsistency and reserved patterns to deal with conflicts (Figure 2).

**FIGURE 2**  
**Hammer’s Conflict Styles**



Source: (Hammer, 2005, p. 691)

The “engagement style” highlights upon “more verbally direct” and “confrontational approach” for resolution of “emotionally expressive conflicts”. “Engagement style” analyzes participant’s honesty towards organizations. This style is considered more reliable as compared to “discussion style” because conflicts are vocally resolved (Hammer, 2005, p. 691). The accommodation style illustrates various approaches for conflict resolutions

and this approach emphasizes upon “more indirect approach” to resolve the issues of disagreements. Another approach is adopted in “more emotionally restrained or controlled manner” to deal with emotional response of each participant to conflict. These styles emphasize upon “ambiguity” & “circumlocution” employed in speech to make sure that conflicts are not out of control. Upholding upon behavior, views, emotions and

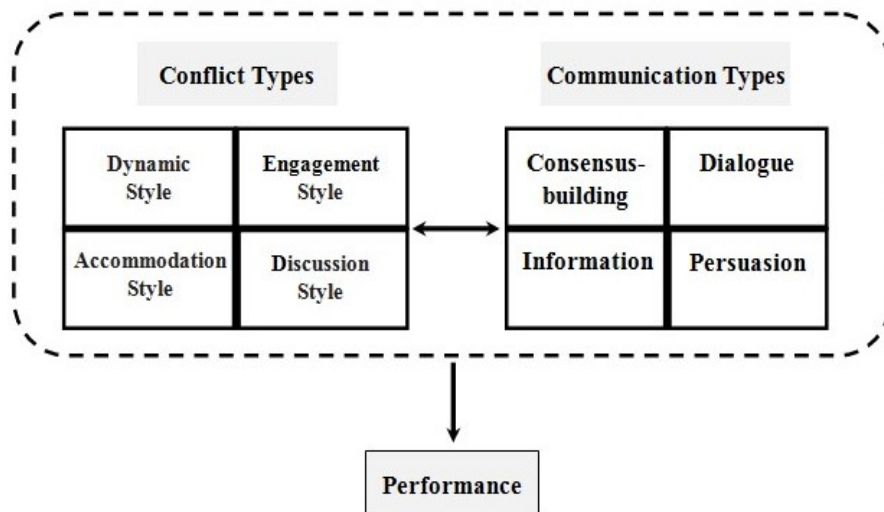
thinking are vital (accommodation approach) for purpose of “interpersonal harmony” as well as for avoiding deviations among the participants. In short, accommodation style utilizes “indirect speech, use of intermediaries and minimizing level of conflict present among the parties” (Hammer, 2005, p. 691). Another approach is “dynamic”, and this approach emphasizes upon “indirect approach” to tackle with issues of “substantive disagreement” and “extreme emotional expression”. Such approach utilizes some linguistic techniques i.e., Exaggeration,

message duplication, associative dispute structure and utilize 3rd participant’s intermediaries together with the confrontational discourse of emotions. (Hammer, 2005, p. 691).

**RESEARCH MODEL**

The current study examined how communication and conflict can interact in organization and affect organizational performance. The conceptual model of the research was showed in figure 3.

**FIGURE 3**  
**Research Model**



**METHODOLOGY**

For estimation, primary data was used and data was collected through “self-completion questionnaire” that was originally developed by authors. First segment of questionnaire contains queries demographic queries. Second segment contains queries regarding organizational communication and conflict. For measuring performance variable the data published by ministry of science, research and technology was used. Response obtained from all queries except demographic questions were measure on five scale points i.e., range from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”.

Firstly, “pilot study” was conducted to get better questionnaire structure and contents. To accomplish this purpose, total 30 questionnaires were forwarded to academicians working in business administration and public management departments of selected Iranian universities. Numerous statements were modified on basis of response and comments (comments were

considered in final version.) from the academicians. For evaluation, 22 sample research institutions were included in the study’s survey. Total 345 questionnaires were distributed and response rate was 68.7% (total of 237). Moreover, after elimination of invalid questionnaires 118 questionnaires were utilized for data analysis. Moreover, several statistical techniques including reliability test, correlation test and regression are employed.

**DATA ANALYSIS**

Frequency analysis was conducted on obtained data. Results indicate that males were 67% and female was 33%. The most of respondents (46.3 percent) ranged the ages between 30 and 40. Ages of 9% of respondents were above 50. In case of working experience, 34.6 percent of respondents had 15 years experience and more than 60 percent had 11 years experience.

The frequency of organizational communication and conflict types are depicted in Table 1.

**TABLE 1**  
**The Frequency of Organizational Communication and Conflict Types**

| Variable                     | Level              | Frequency | Percentage |
|------------------------------|--------------------|-----------|------------|
| Organizational Communication | Information        | 7         | 30.43%     |
|                              | Persuasion         | 2         | 8.7%       |
|                              | Dialogue           | 11        | 47.83%     |
|                              | Consensus-building | 3         | 13.04%     |
| Organizational Conflict      | Engagement         | 2         | 100        |

As shown in Table 1, the most communication type in sample institution was dialogue and the least communication types were Consensus-building and Consensus-building respectively. The conflict type in all institution was Engagement.

### Reliability Test

The concluding step of validation measurement consists of

coefficient alpha calculation for each set of measures to analyze reliability. Cronbach's alpha is used for estimation the reliability of multi-item scale. Results demonstrates that cut-off point is generally 0.6 (Hair, Anderson, Tatham & Black, 1992). In view of the fact that, all alpha values were between 0.79 and 0.88 and all above 0.78 the construct in our model resulted in being very reliable (see Table 2).

**TABLE 2**  
**Cronbach's Alpha**

| Variable                     | No of Cases | No of Items | Alpha |
|------------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------|
| Organizational Communication | 30          | 24          | 0.935 |
| Organizational Conflict      | 30          | 20          | 0.860 |

High levels of internal consistency ( $\alpha > 0.8$ ) were obtained for the measures of Organizational communication. Adequate levels of internal consistency ( $\alpha > 0.7$ ) were obtained for Organizational conflict.

### Correlation and Regression Test

Table 3 represents the output of correlation test among variables.

**TABLE 3**  
**Correlation Matrix**

|               |                     | Communication | Conflict | Performance |
|---------------|---------------------|---------------|----------|-------------|
| Communication | Pearson Correlation | 1             |          |             |
|               | Sig. (2-tailed)     |               |          |             |
|               | N                   | 22            |          |             |
| Conflict      | Pearson Correlation | .531(*)       | 1        |             |
|               | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .011          |          |             |
|               | N                   | 22            | 22       |             |
| Performance   | Pearson Correlation | .550(**)      | .419     | 1           |
|               | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .008          | .052     |             |
|               | N                   | 22            | 22       | 22          |

According to Table 3, at the 95% significant level, direct relation exists among communication and conflict; communication and performance. But there is no linear relationship between

conflict and performance. The summary of regression model (between communication and performance) is depicted in Table 4.

TABLE 4  
Model Summary (b)

| Model                                      | R      | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate |
|--|--------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| 1  | 0.550a | 0.302    | 0.267             | 0.65906                    |
| a) Predictor: Organizational communication |        |          |                   |                            |
| b) dependent variable: Performance         |        |          |                   |                            |

According to Table 4,  $R^2 = 0.302$  that means 30 percent of performance variable can be explained by the organizational communication variable. As shown in Table 3, there is no linear relationship between conflict and performance. May be there is a nonlinear relationship between these variables. Moreover, to

estimate the nonlinear relationship between conflict and performance, the independent variable (conflict) in the form of second degree was entered in the model. For this, the summary of regression model (between conflict<sup>2</sup> and performance) is depicted in Table 5.

TABLE 5  
Model Summary (b)

| Model  | R      | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate |
|--|--------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| 1  | 0.633a | 0.401    | 0.326             | 0.59734                    |
| a) Predictor: Organizational conflict <sup>2</sup> |        |          |                   |                            |
| b) dependent variable: Performance                 |        |          |                   |                            |

According to table 55, the correlation coefficient between conflict and performance is 0.633 and  $R^2 = 0.401$  that means 40 percent of performance can be explained by the organizational conflict.

## CONCLUSION

This study adds to the growing literature on organizational behavior (especially at the group level behavior) by examining the relationship between organizational communication, conflict and performance. The finding revealed that there is a significant direct relationship between organizational communication and organizational conflict. Also there is direct relationship between organizational communication and performance. The findings of the current study show that there is linear relationship

between organizational conflict and performance. But there is the significant nonlinear relationship between conflict and performance as some researches had suggested (e.g., Robbins, 1987; Rahim, 2001).

The current research was conducted among research institutions in Iran and whether the findings from this work would be consistent with other countries' research institutions would need to be verified through further research. Furthermore, since the sample size is limited, the results can be taken only as indicative results and the findings need to be compared and confirmed with other research work with much bigger and more diversified sample size to obtain better accuracy. The employment of a non-probability convenient sample may also limit the generalizability of the findings.

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