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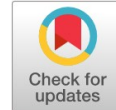


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ROLE OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE IN ORGANIZATIONAL CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

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Abstract. This research aimed to study emotional intelligence and conflict management styles of employees associated with the private sector organizations in Surat, Gujarat, India. Specifically, this study tried to explore a relationship between the emotional intelligence level of employees and their respective styles of handling conflict. The study applied two instruments, namely, the Emotional Intelligence Scale, to measure emotional intelligence and the Conflict Style Survey to determine the conflict management style of the employees. A stratified convenience sampling has been taken for conducting the research. The findings depict that employees have an emotional intelligence highest in Empathy and Self-Motivation, but lowest in Self-Development. The Collaborating and Competing conflict management styles are the two most used by the employees in handling conflict within the organization. In comparison, the Avoiding style is the least used by the employees.

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INTRODUCTION

Statements of Problem

Over the past years, conventional qualities linked with leadership such as intelligence, strength, fortitude, and vision were adequate for a person to be titled as successful. Today the concept is narrowed down to emotional intelligence, which is the ability to comprehend, perceive and manage feelings, emotions and motivation of ones self as well as of others. Emotions work hand in hand with different kinds of conflicts. Conflict is a situation where there are at least two different perspectives or opinions, which can lead to non-productive results or can be beneficially resolved and hence lead to quality final products. Managing conflicts is a challenge. It requires appropriate selection of strategies which eventually depends on persons management skills, what we call emotional intelligence.

Organizations, in general and Indian organizations in particular, many a times face certain adverse scenarios emerging from improper and inappropriate behavioral patterns of employees which in turn influence their commitment towards the organization negatively and consequently drag them into interpersonal and intrapersonal conflicts. In such circumstances, it is inevitable for an organization to have emotionally intelligent as well as stable employees in order to handle the conflict effectively and bring about positive outcomes. This leads to the following problem statements:

1. Do employees with high emotional intelligence use the collaborating or compromising styles of conflict management?

2. Do the employees having low emotional intelligence use competing or avoiding styles of conflict management?

Purpose of the Study

A study of organizational conflict management along with emotional intelligence would definitely capture some insight that would be instrumental to facilitate smooth functioning of the organization. The main intent behind conducting this study is that more recognition would occur in examining the value of having emotional intelligence explored during conflict instead of technical skills alone. The outcome of this research and its components can be further utilized by researcher, who intends to study the extent of the relationship between emotional intelligence and the styles of managing conflicts.

Definition of Terms

Emotional Intelligence

It can be referred to as knowing and using ones feeling in efficiently motivating oneself and others effectively, and managing relationships by exhibiting empathy and interacting smoothly with one another (Goleman, 1998). Emotional intelligence plays a significant role in the organizations due to the following reasons:

1) Emotions that are handled effectively may contribute to how one handles the needs of individuals

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2) How one motivates employees

3) How comfortable the employees feel at work.

The major components of emotional intelligence are:

Self-Awareness: This component provides the basis for all other components of emotional intelligence (Dattner, 2003). It means being aware of what you are feeling, being conscious of the emotions within yourself. People who are in touch with their emotions are better able to guide their own lives. One needs to be in touch with his emotions in order to interact effectively and appreciate emotions in others. People with high levels of self-awareness learn to trust their gut feelings and realize that these feelings can provide them with useful information about difficult situations whenever required.

Empathy: It means being able to put yourself in someone else's shoes- to recognize what others are feeling, without them needing to tell you. Most of the time people don't tell us what they feel in words but rather in tone of voice, body language, facial expression and many such non-verbal cues. Empathy is built from self-awareness; being attuned to one's own emotions makes it easier to read and understand the feelings of others.

Self-Motivation: This is the ability to be hopeful and optimistic despite obstacles, setbacks or even outright failure is crucial for pursuing long term goals in personal as well as professional life (Barbuto Jr & Xu, 2006).

Emotional Stability: The people scoring high in this are less reactive to stress. They tend to be composed, even-tempered, and less likely to feel tensed or rattled. They are low in negative emotions. Such people tend to perform better as they are able to think clearly by managing their emotions. Managing does not mean suppressing or denying them but understanding them and using it to deal with situations productively.

Managing Relations: The ability to connect to others, build positive relationships, respond to the emotions of others and influence others is an important component of emotional intelligence (Cherniss, Goleman, Emmerling, Cowan & Adler, 1998). We need social skills to understand interpersonal relationships, handle disagreements, resolve conflicts and pull people together for a common purpose.

Integrity: This means a person's willingness to keep commitments and build trust. People scoring high on this know their values and principles. They tend to examine their own behaviors and admit mistakes. They believe in keeping their word and treating people fairly.

Self-Development: This is a lifelong process. It's the way for people to assess their skills and qualities, consider their aims in life and set goals in order to realize and maximize their potential.

Value-orientation: This is about the principles of right and wrong that are accepted by an individual or a social group.

Commitment: The people scoring high on this are dedicated to a cause or activity that they take up. Altruistic behavior: This is the principle or practice of concern for the welfare of others.

CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STYLES

It refers to how we approach the other party in a conflict situation. For effective conflict management in organizations, employees should learn to apply different conflict management strategies in different situations. The five major styles of conflict management are:

Accommodating: This is when you cooperate to a high-degree, and it may be at your own expense, and actually work against your own goals, objectives, and desired outcomes. This approach is effective when the other party is the expert or has a better solution. It can also be effective for preserving future relations with the other party.

Avoiding: This is when you simply avoid the issue. You aren't helping the other party reach their goals, and you aren't assertively pursuing your own. This works when the issue is trivial or when you have no chance of winning. It can also be effective when the issue would be very costly. It's also very effective when the atmosphere is emotionally charged and you need to create some space. Sometimes issues will resolve themselves, but hope is not a strategy, and, in general, avoiding is not a good long term strategy.

Collaborating: This is where you partner or pair up with the other party to achieve both of your goals. This is how you break free of the win-lose paradigm and seek the win-win. This can be effective for complex scenarios where you need to find a novel solution. This can also mean re-framing the challenge to create a bigger space and room for everybody's ideas. The downside is that it requires a high-degree of trust and reaching a consensus can require a lot of time and effort to get everybody on board and to synthesize all the ideas.

Competing: This is the win-lose approach. You act in a very assertive way to achieve your goals, without seeking to cooperate with the other party, and it may be at the expense of the other party. This approach may be appropriate for emergencies when time is of the essence, or when you need quick, decisive action, and people are aware of and support the approach.

Compromising: This is the lose-lose scenario where neither party 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. The trap is to fall into compromising as an easy way out, when collaborating would produce a better solution.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

These are the two apparent limitations of the study:

The findings of the research solely depend upon the level of fairness and honesty maintained by the employees in responding to the provided questionnaires.

Moreover, the study will provide insights only about the private sector organizations and not the government organizations that experience a different work environment.

Research Objectives

To explore the correlation between Emotional Intelligence and Organizational Conflict Management (Elsayed-Ekjiouly & Buda, 1996). To measure the Emotional Intelligence Quotient (EQ) of employees and its overall impact on their conflict management abilities within the organization.

This research study consists of a quantitative approach. Two sets of surveys were used in this study: Emotional Intelligence Scale to measure the emotional intelligence among the employees and Conflict Style Survey to assess the five styles of handling conflict within organization. The results of the surveys were analyzed using Excel to weigh and score participants' responses. The clean data were then thoroughly analyzed utilizing Multiple Regression Analysis and one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) to investigate the correlation between emotional intelligence and conflict management styles among employees associated with certain private sector organizations.

LITERATURE REVIEW

"People with high-EQs are clearly more effective in resolving conflict than low-EQ people. As someone who teaches conflict management skills, I have found that its not enough merely to teach the techniques of conflict negotiation and resolution. If you expect the training to be effective, you also have to raise EQ levels." According to Reece (2014) people can become more effective participants through social interactions. The workplace is one of the environments in which people learn about behavior and emotions which take on a greater significance in organizational life. In a study of emotional intelligence and interpersonal relations, Schutte conducted seven studies to test Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences, Averill and Nunley's emotional creativity theory and Saarnis theory of emotional competence.

Abas (2010) in a prevailing world scenario, organizations in general and corporate organizations in particular are changing rapidly in order to compete with global pace of development. It is also been perceived that in a majority of instances, it is

the Emotional Quotient (EQ) that helps a person to achieve the pinnacle of success.

Goleman (2004) says that intelligence contributes only 20% towards one's success in professional career and the rest 80% is attributed to management skills, what he calls emotional intelligence. Khan (2013) argued that developing emotional competence requires that we unlearn habits of thought, feeling and action that are deeply ingrained, and grow new ones. Such a process takes motivation, effort, time, support and sustained practice. The preparation and transfer-and-maintenance phases of the training process are especially important.

Rahim et al. (2002) study on a model of emotional intelligence and conflict management styles; they used emotional intelligence definition by Goleman (1996) that has five components at work: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy and social skills. These components are significantly correlated with each other. From the study, they found that, for conflict management strategy, motivation is positively associated with problem solving strategy and negatively associated with bargaining strategy. Fascinatingly, the same results of conflict management strategies occurred in the US and seven other countries: Greece, China, Hong Kong, Macau, Bangladesh, South Africa and Portugal.

In the study on the relationship between emotional intelligence itself and conflict management style, they applied the definition of conflict management styles by Blake and Mouton (1964). The findings of this study showed that intelligence of supervisors was positively associated with subordinates use of integrating, compromising and dominating styles of handling conflict with the supervisors, while integrating styles can be most predicted by emotional intelligence.

METHODOLOGY

This study's purpose was to investigate the relationship between emotional intelligence and conflict management styles among employees associated with private sector organizations. From this study, the researcher hoped to identify both the relationship of the two variables, and how this study would be able to provide recommendations from the findings to improve the performance of the organization. This section will outline multiple aspects of the research conducted, including: research objectives, planning, instrumentation utilized, participant/subjects, data collection and analysis procedures, and limitations of the study.

Subject Selection and Description

The target subjects were employees of different ages, ethnicities and socioeconomic statuses in India.

Instrumentation

This research study consists of a quantitative approach. A group of 50 employees were randomly selected from a reputed private sector organization located in Surat, Gujarat. The age varies from 24 to 57 years having years of service experience on the present job. Two sets of survey were used in this study.

- Emotional Intelligence Scale
- Conflict Style Survey

Emotional Intelligence Scale

This was used to measure the emotional intelligence among the employees chosen as sample for the study. The instrument consists of 34 items to be answered on 5-point ratings. It measures ten dimensions of emotional intelligence namely, self-awareness, empathy, self-motivation, emotional stability, managing relations, integrity, self-development, value-orientation, commitment and altruistic behavior. Higher score indicates better emotional intelligence of the subject.

Conflict Style Survey

The Conflict Style Survey measures five styles of strategies for managing organizational conflicts namely, competing, compromising, collaborating, accommodating and avoiding. The survey identifies twelve situations that one is likely to encounter in professional lives. Each situation comes with the five possible behavioral responses or attitudes. The sample has to allocate ten points between them to indicate their typical behavior, with the highest number of points indicating their strongest choice. Any response can be answered with from zero to ten points, as long as all five responses for a given situation add up to ten points.

Data Analysis

Raw data from the participants were entered into an Excel

The Table 2 clearly depicts that the employees scored the highest on the domains of Self-Motivation ($M=23.52$, $SD=2.45$) and Empathy ($M=19.12$, $SD=1.72$), while they scored the least on Self-Development ($M=7.38$, $SD=1.18$). The Table-2 shows that the employees use Collaborating ($M=30.84$), Competing

The Multiple Regression Analysis further shows that the Emotional Intelligence level of employees has the maximum correlation with the Compromising style of managing conflicts.

spreadsheet for referencing purposes. Then, the data were analyzed with Mean, Standard Deviation, Multiple Regression Analysis and One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) to obtain quantitative descriptions in a manageable form. With the clean data, multiple regression analysis was used to find whether there is a significant relationship between emotional intelligence and conflict management styles among the employees.

The regression analysis was used to test the following hypothesis:

H0: Null Hypothesis- There is no significant impact of EI level on any of the Conflict Management Styles.

H1: Alternative Hypothesis- There is a significant impact of EI level on the Conflict Management Styles.

Summary of Analysis

This study utilized survey to identify the relationship between emotional intelligence and conflict management styles. Fifty copies of surveys have been returned to the researcher and they were used to answer the hypotheses above. Participants' personal information and the procedures for data collection and data analysis insured both confidentiality and accuracy. The data were recorded in a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet and were later analyzed. Two statistical techniques were used in this study: correlation and multiple regressions, in order to get the idea of the sample and to ensure that they meet the assumption of the inferential statistics.

RESULTS

Description of the Sample

Altogether, there were 50 male employees who agreed to fill out the surveys. The participants' ages were between 24 and 57 years old. All the employees are associated with the organization for more than 5 years and are working on a managerial post or higher.

($M=29.62$) and Compromising ($M=28.82$) style more often while dealing with various organizational conflicts. while Accommodating ($M=18.66$) and Avoiding ($M=10.98$) styles are being used the least.

Moreover, it has the least impact on the Competing style. Hence the impact, most to least, can be rated as Compromising, Avoiding, Accommodating, Collaborating and Competing.

TABLE 1
Showing Mean, SD on Variables of Emotional Intelligence Scale (N=50)

Variables	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)
Self-Awareness	15.02	1.78
Empathy	19.12	1.72
Self-Motivation	23.52	2.45
Emotional Stability	13.68	2.13
Managing Relations	16.28	1.94
Integrity	11.46	1.56
Self-Development	7.38	1.18
Value-Orientation	7.7	1.25
Commitment	8.4	0.87
Altruistic Behavior	7.56	1.02

TABLE 2
Showing Mean, SD on Variables of Conflict Management Style (N=50)

Variables	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)
Computing	29.62	14.32
Compromising	28.82	8.38
Collaborating	30.84	10.28
Accommodating	18.66	8.27
Avoiding	10.98	7.93

The Table-4 shows the results of one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) carried out in order to obtain the degree of variance within the styles of conflict management. Following hypotheses were considered:

1. Null Hypothesis: There is no significant difference
2. Alternative Hypothesis: There is a significant difference.

As per the result table, the P-value lies within the non-rejection region and hence the null hypothesis can be rejected.

Hence it suggests that there is significant difference within the styles of managing conflicts.

DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

This study aimed to examine the relationships between the domains of emotional intelligence and the five styles used by employees when handling conflicts within their respective organizations.

Summarizing the results, a list of important conclusions based on the statistical analysis throughout the project is mentioned below:

- Employees have an emotional intelligence that is highest in Empathy and Self-Motivation, but lowest in Self-Development.
- The Collaborating and Competing conflict management styles are the two most used by the employees in handling

conflict within the organization. While the Avoiding style is the least used by the employees.

- Emotional intelligence of employees is positively associated with their use of the Collaborating style of handling conflict.
- Emotional intelligence of employees is positively associated with their use of the Competing style of handling conflict.

LIMITATIONS

There was one limitation that was observed in this study. Each survey contained a section for subjects to fill out their personal information. They were encouraged to include their names and roles in the organization. Because of the missing information on the five surveys, only fifty employees were identified and could be used. It is believed that the reason subjects failed to fill out this section was because they were concerned that their personal information would be disclosed. However, it was stated in the consent form that all information on the survey was only meant for researcher's eyes and would remain purely confidential.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results of the statistics and also the researcher's observations, several suggestions can be incorporated for con-

TABLE 3
Showing Summary Table of Multiple Regression Analysis Incorporating EI as Predictor and Conflict Management as Criterion

Criterion	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	SE	F
Competing	0.0018	3.34	-0.02	14.61	0.000160
Compromising	0.3347	0.11	0.09	8.06	6.058667
Collaborating	0.0622	0.003	-0.16	10.48	0.1869
Accommodating	0.0955	0.009	-0.01	8.40	0.4422
Avoiding	0.1295	0.016	-0.003	8.02	0.8196

TABLE 4
Showing summary Table of One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)

ANOVA: Single Factor						
Summary						
Groups	Count	Sum	Average	Variance		
Competing	50	1481	29.62	209.2608		
Compromising	50	1441	28.82	71.78327		
Collaborating	50	1542	30.84	108.0147		
Accommodating	50	933	18.66	69.90245		
Avoiding	50	549	10.98	64.18327		
ANOVA						
Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	p-value	F critical
Between Groups	14970.26	4	3742.564	35.76989	1.56E-23	3.396607
Within Groups	25634.08	245	104.6289			
Total	40604.34	249				

tinuous improvement.

- Increase emotional intelligence through team-building, training, activities and social hours among the employees.
- Provide effective orientation and on the job training for new or current employees in introducing new job routines so there will be no conflict arising from job tasks.
- Emphasize the importance of emotional intelligence rather than IQ and technical skills alone to make successful leaders and to promote.
- Emphasize the importance of emotional intelligence rather than IQ and technical skills alone to be successful leaders and to promote better work performance.

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