



Causes of Underutilization of the Existing Conflict Management Strategies

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Available online at: www.isca.in

Received 30th March 2013, revised 11th June 2013, accepted 20th July 2013

Abstract

Conflict management styles have been in practice since organizational activities in the business as well as school climate initiated. Conflicts whether mild or acute need to be handled well in time so as to avoid its negative impact both on the individual as well as organizational performance. Different conflict management strategies have been in practice for handling varied conflicts. The present study focused on the use of different styles utilized for the management of conflicts in schools. Its major objective was to investigate why the existing styles were not utilized for the management of conflicts. It also concentrated on the question whether the administrators have been kept in dark regarding the use of these styles or whether there were other factors involved which became a hurdle for the principals in the use of these styles. Data were collected from both principals as well as teachers of the selected schools of District Charsadda. Questionnaires were utilized for the collection of data which were served to both type of target population who gave their responses regarding the non usability of the existent conflict management styles. Kendall's Tau B and Tau C were utilized for analysis of data. Recommendations made on the basis of the findings showed that conflict management styles must be properly and timely utilized. It was also made clear that proper training workshops need to be arranged for the school staff so that they might be well aware of the causes and uses of all the conflict management strategies.

Keywords: Conflict Management, Conflict Management strategy, Win-Win Approach, Collaborative Style etc..

Introduction

Conflict has been a common phenomenon since human organizations were established for the achievement of organizational goals and it has always remained the main cause of strife between/among the members of the organization.

Management of conflict remains an important component of all the organizations. Conflict whether interpersonal or intergroup must be acknowledged. It occurs in all organizations, its total negligence deteriorates the working relationship of all involved. Like all other organizations, schools too are often replete with one or other type of conflict. Secondary schools' principals are always directly involved in the management of conflicts that occur in their schools¹.

Review of Literature

Conflict Management Style: According to Filley and Hall, conflict management styles refer to various types of well laid out responses which are properly planned and patterned for handling of conflicts and these are usually analyzed by peeping into the strategies through which an individual tries to disclose what patterns are adopted in a conflict situation. Two factors are said to be always involved in the management of conflict which are; (a) the degree of concern an individual shows for relationships with others and (b) the

degree of concern the individual shows for achieving personal goals².

Conflict Management: According to some conflict management experts including Robbins (1974) believe that conflict management is a "planning and evaluating of conflict levels"³. Different planning and organizational activities are undertaken which subsequently end up with the management of conflicts in the schools. Conflict management is deemed to be a social process by which people or groups handle grievances about each other's behaviors. Conflict management generally consists of diagnostic processes, negotiating strategies, and other interventions techniques which focuses on the avoidance of unnecessary conflict and tries to reduce or resolve excessive conflict⁴. Organizations develop only and only when there is a clear understanding of conflict management functions, these are always treated as catalyst and a strong stimulant for organizational innovation. At this stage the leader does not consider resolving conflict but he looks for ways which manage conflict in such ways which necessitates change, flexibility and responsiveness in the individuals⁵.

Complete annihilation of conflict in the work environment is not possible because of the opinions of different stakeholders which they hold about conflict. Some argue that it is a necessary organizational phenomenon while some other considers it major source of all types of rifts in the organization which directly or indirectly affect school life.

Rabie opines about conflict management that, "Conflict can never be eliminated; it can only be managed to minimize its negative impact, reduce its intensity, and facilitate its positive role in human development. Management of conflict and its resolution is not a routine task of the organization but it often is contained and regulated⁶.

Different Strategies in Common Practice are

Negotiation and Mediation: Mediation and negotiation defined by Bodin and Crawford as occurring in the school settings which is composed of different people with different generational gaps and that negotiation and mediation must be identified as the best strategies for mitigating conflicts⁷.

Mediation is structured process adopted for the solution of conflict between two or more individuals or groups whereas negotiation refers to the process where the people in conflict are brought face to face to each other and then with mutual consent of both the parties a solution is reached upon.

Avoidance or withdrawal: Withdrawal or avoidance is one of the simplest of all conflict management styles. It means to do nothing in any conflicting situation; it assumes that by ignoring the conflict it will be resolved by itself.⁸

Principal can utilize this style when he perceives that; when the parties involved regard that the issue is minor one, and when both parties require additional time to cool off.

The dominating response I win/you lose: This management style seems an undesirable one because of the outcomes for various situations, particularly in a high school when the stakes are high for both the conflict parties. This leads to destructive results because the conflict is not resolved and there is the possibility of its further escalation⁹.

Integrative/collaborative, powerful-powerful, win-win: This conflict management style is replete with mutual differences, but both the parties consider that conflict is natural and healthy. Objective behavior of both the parties is a positive point in reaching a mutually agreed solution of the problem. Because of objectivity involved, this style is termed as one of co-operation and win-win¹⁰.

The obliging response "I lose/you win": This style displays one party's self-sacrifice for resolving the dispute. The obliging person can't say "No" to others' unreasonable requests and also has guilt feelings. Its effects for the obliging person are long-term because he'll become a pushover in all future conflicts¹¹.

Compromise win-lose-win-lose: This style stresses at reaching a solution, by both the parties, of the problem by

mutual give and take. With compromise each person wins some major issues and loses others¹².

1.2 Objectives of the Study: This paper tried to explore the major causes of the non usability of the existent conflict management techniques that are in vogue in the secondary schools of KPK. Thus, the major objective of this study was to know about the causes of under utilization of different conflict management strategies in the public sector schools of KPK (Pakistan).

Research Questions: The following research questions were addressed in this study: i. Is principal harsh behavior a cause of non usability of conflict management styles?, ii. Is community involvement a factor for non utilization of conflict management strategies?, iii. Is non availability of proper management training a cause?, iv. Is non cooperation from teaching staff a cause?

Methodology and Data Source

Data Collection Method: Data were collected through questionnaire which was served to principals as well as teachers of the selected schools of KPK. The questionnaire items elicited responses regarding the causes of non usability of conflict management styles by the principals. A five point Likert scale was used for the collection of data which was consisted of closed-ended items.

Data Analysis Method: In the first step all data were tabulated and then analyzed using statistical technique of Tau B and Tau C.

Sampling Plan: Fifty eight secondary schools comprised total population for the present study. Principals and teachers were taken as sample of the study. Total number of respondents was twenty six.

Analysis of Data: Following tables are representative of the analyzed data as well as interpretation of the data has been given with each table.

Correlation between the responses of teachers and principals was calculated through Kendall's correlation technique which is for ordinal by ordinal. The p-value which is $0.001 < 0.05$ shows that the correlation between the responses is highly significant which means that teachers and principals agree on the same level of response. It means that no proper training opportunities are provided for management of conflict.

The p-value which is $0.014 < 0.05$ shows that the correlation between the responses is highly significant which means that no help or response is given by the higher authorities whenever there is any conflict in the school.

Table-1
Any proper training

CMGP * CMGT Cross-tabulation							
Count							
		Any proper training					Total
		Never	Seldom	Occasionally	Frequently	Always	
CMGP	Never	6	1	0	1	0	8
	Seldom	1	1	1	0	1	4
	Occasionally	1	1	1	1	1	5
	Frequently	1	1	1	1	1	5
	Always	1	1	1	0	1	4
Total		10	5	4	3	4	26

Symmetric Measures					
		Value	Asymp. Std. Error ^a	Approx. T ^b	Approx. Sig.
Ordinal by Ordinal	Kendall's tau-b	.222	.065	3.384	.001
	Kendall's tau-c	.158	.047	3.384	.001
N of Valid Cases		26			

Table-2
Authority remains reluctant

CMGP * CMGT Cross-tabulation							
Count							
		Authority remains reluctant					Total
		Never	Seldom	Occasionally	Frequently	Always	
CMG8P	Never	2	0	0	1	0	3
	Seldom	1	0	1	1	1	4
	Occasionally	2	0	1	1	1	5
	Frequently	2	1	1	1	1	6
	Always	5	1	1	0	1	8
Total		12	2	4	4	4	26

Symmetric Measures					
		Value	Asymp. Std. Error ^a	Approx. T ^b	Approx. Sig.
Ordinal by Ordinal	Kendall's tau-b	.139	.056	2.461	.014
	Kendall's tau-c	.134	.054	2.461	.014
N of Valid Cases		26			

The p-value which is $0.003 < 0.05$ shows that the correlation between the responses is highly significant meaning that principals are not helped out by the teaching staff in the management of conflict in the schools.

The question whether the Principal displays harsh behavior towards subordinates", Correlation between the responses of

teachers and principals was calculated through Kendall's correlation technique. The p-value which is $0.001 < 0.05$ shows that the correlation between the responses is highly significant which means that teachers and principals agree on the same level of response showing that the behavior of the principal never remained a cause of the non usability of conflict management styles in the school.

Table-3
Non cooperation from teaching staff

CMGP * CMGT Cross-tabulation							
Count							
		Non cooperation from teaching staff					Total
		Never	Seldom	Occasionally	Frequently	Always	
CMG11P	Never	2	0	1	1	0	4
	Seldom	2	1	1	0	1	5
	Occasionally	1	0	1	1	2	5
	Frequently	1	1	1	1	1	5
	Always	2	1	1	1	2	7
Total		8	3	5	4	6	26

Symmetric Measures					
		Value	Asymp. Std. Error ^a	Approx. T ^b	Approx. Sig.
Ordinal by Ordinal	Kendall's tau-b	.200	.066	3.016	.003
	Kendall's tau-c	.130	.043	3.016	.003
N of Valid Cases		26			

Table-4
Principal harsh behavior with subordinates

CMGP * CMGT Cross-tabulation							
Count							
		Principal harsh behavior with subordinates					Total
		Never	Seldom	Occasionally	Frequently	Always	
CMG12P	Never	5	1	2	1	0	9
	Seldom	1	1	1	1	1	5
	Occasionally	1	1	2	1	0	5
	Frequently	0	1	1	1	1	4
	Always	0	0	2	0	1	3
Total		7	4	8	4	3	26

Symmetric Measures					
		Value	Asymp. Std. Error ^a	Approx. T ^b	Approx. Sig.
Ordinal by Ordinal	Kendall's tau-b	.219	.065	3.271	.001
	Kendall's tau-c	.153	.047	3.271	.001
N of Valid Cases		26			

The question whether Polarization of the teachers is a cause of the under utilization of conflict styles in the schools, was put to the principals as well as teachers". The p-value which is $0.036 < 0.05$ shows that the correlation between the responses is highly significant which means that teachers and principals agree on the same level of response. It means that teachers'

polarization some time remained a cause/hurdle in the use of conflict management styles in the school.

Correlation between the responses of teachers and principals was calculated through Kendall's correlation technique which is for ordinal by ordinal. The p-value which is $0.002 < 0.05$ show that the community interference is not a major cause of the under utilization of the existent conflict management styles.

Table-5
Polarization of the teachers

CMGP * CMGT Cross-tabulation							
Count							
		Polarization of the teachers					Total
		Never	Seldom	occasionally	Frequently	Always	
CMG13P	Never	0	1	2	1	3	7
	Seldom	1	0	1	2	0	4
	Occasionally	1	1	1	1	0	4
	Frequently	1	0	1	1	0	3
	Always	4	1	2	1	0	8
Total		7	3	7	6	3	26

Symmetric Measures					
		Value	Asymp. Std. Error ^a	Approx. T ^b	Approx. Sig.
Ordinal by Ordinal	Kendall's tau-b	.131	.062	2.097	.036
	Kendall's tau-c	.126	.060	2.097	.036
N of Valid Cases		26			

Table-6
Community involvement in school affairs

CMGP * CMGT Cross-tabulation							
Count							
		Community involvement in school affairs					Total
		Never	Seldom	Occasionally	Frequently	Always	
CMG14P	Never	4	1	3	1	0	9
	Seldom	1	1	1	0	1	4
	Occasionally	0	1	2	1	1	5
	Frequently	0	1	1	1	1	4
	Always	0	1	1	1	1	4
Total		5	5	8	4	4	26

Symmetric Measures					
		Value	Asymp. Std. Error ^a	Approx. T ^b	Approx. Sig.
Ordinal by Ordinal	Kendall's tau-b	.207	.066	3.080	.002
	Kendall's tau-c	.151	.049	3.080	.002
N of Valid Cases		26			

Table-7
Authoritative behavior of the principal

CMGP * CMGT Cross-tabulation							
Count							
		Authoritative behavior of the principal					Total
		Never	Seldom	Occasionally	Frequently	Always	
CMG15P	Never	2	1	2	1	0	6
	Seldom	1	1	1	0	1	4
	Occasionally	0	2	1	1	1	5
	Frequently	1	2	1	1	1	6
	Always	1	1	1	1	1	5
Total		5	7	6	4	4	26

Symmetric Measures					
		Value	Asymp. Std. Error ^a	Approx. T ^b	Approx. Sig.
Ordinal by Ordinal	Kendall's tau-b	.182	.064	2.805	.005
	Kendall's tau-c	.134	.048	2.805	.005
N of Valid Cases		26			

The p-value which is $0.005 < 0.05$ shows that the correlation between the responses is highly significant which means that principals' authoritative behavior is one of the cause of under utilization of these styles.

Findings of the Study: Following were the major findings of the study: i. Findings of the study show that no proper training opportunities are provided for management of conflict. ii. Almost no help or response is given by the higher authorities whenever there occurred conflict in the school. iii. Findings delineated the fact that principals are not helped out by the teaching staff in the management of conflict in the schools. iv. Findings showed that the behavior of the principal never remained a cause of the non usability of conflict management styles in the school. v. Result further proved the fact that teachers' polarization some time remained a cause/hurdle in the use of conflict management styles in the school. vi. It was also found out in the findings that the community interference was not a major cause of the under utilization of the existent conflict management styles. vii. It was also proved that principals' authoritative behavior was one of the causes of under utilization of these styles.

Recommendations: The following suggestions are forwarded for the educational high ups so that these might be considered and remedied for the smooth running of the system, i. There should by proper training opportunities, for all the stake holders, for management of conflict in schools. ii. Polarization in the schools is a great setback in the interpersonal relationship of the school staff, measures should be taken so that grouping (polarization) in the schools might be washed out from the schools. iii. Authorities should provide timely help to the

principals in conflict management process. iv. Teachers should be motivated to take interest in the schools' affairs so that the negative impact of conflict might be minimized. v. Principals should also adopt a democratic approach towards his subordinates so that he might secure their services in the handling of conflict.

Conclusion

Conflict being the necessary and unavoidable component of work relation needs to be managed and as such these not to be avoided. Different conflict management styles have been in practice to deal with different conflicts in a most positive way. The present study mainly focused on the question that although there are different conflict management strategies but still these are not being properly utilized. Findings of the study delineated the fact that there are different causes which hinder the use of different conflict management styles. These causes need to be controlled so as to manage all types of conflicts in the work relation.

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