ТЕОРЕТИЧНИ МОДЕЛИ ЗА УПРАВЛЕНИЕ НА КОНФЛИКТИТЕ

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Резюме: В статията е направен сравнителен анализ на различни гледни точки за конфликтите, съществуващи в научната литература. Посочени са основните характеристики на конфликтите и са представени теории и модели на дисфункционални конфликти. Разгледани са различни стратегии за справяне с конфликтите.

Ключови думи: Управление на конфликтите, характеристики на конфликтите, междуличностни конфликти, дисфункционални конфликти, методи за управление на конфликтите.

THEORETICAL MODELS FOR CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

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Abstract. The article provides a comparative analysis of different points of view on the conflicts contained in the scientific literature. The main characteristics of the conflicts are indicated and theories and models of dysfunctional conflicts are presented. Various strategies for dealing with conflicts are discussed.

Key words. Conflict management, characteristics of conflicts, interpersonal conflicts, dysfunctional conflicts, methods of conflict management.

Introduction

Conflicts are a feature of natural life. Sometimes, conflicts are increased to turn into serious disputes, leading to negative reactions and counter-reactions. Thus, violence occurs between the parties. On the other hand, conflict can be positive as it pushes individuals to find innovative solutions in order to clarify some facts and information and in order to bring about change and development. Actually, conflict management is used to investigate features of interpersonal communication.

In this article, we try to shed light on define the conflict, reveal its characteristics, and will address the models presented by the literature to resolve conflicts.

1. The definition of Conflict

Conflict is defined as a type of interactions between two parties or more because of different goals or resources causing disputes (Hocker and Wilmot, 1995). This definition is limited. It is extended later to cover the interpersonal relations between the disputing parties (Canary, Cupach and Messman, 1995). In the light of this, conflict is defined as the disagreement between two parties or more over their desires values, and/or interests. The main reason of disagreement is that if one party achieves his/her goal, the other party is harmed or deprived from achieving his/her goals. Thus, the achievement of one's goal is preventing the other party from doing so. From this definition, conflict refers to the breakdown of relationships. Despite this, some theories claim that conflict may lead to a positive change.

Shalev and Yehexkeli (1994) believe that interpersonal conflict can be very beneficial in some cases, especially when it is directed towards solving the disputes. In these cases, it is a turning positive point. Moreover, when attempting to resolve the conflict, the individual can find out several unseen options which s/he is not

aware of. Conflict parties can also find new potentials related to themselves or related to the opposing sides and the situation causing the conflict. Furthermore, process of conflict can give rise to new insights on the subject causing the conflict and form positive attitudes towards it.

2. The main characteristics of the conflict

First, conflict is an **inevitable** phenomenon in human's life since they are an integral part of human existence. In even an interactive situation, there is a possibility of disagreement. Also, a clash of people's interests can occur when they attempt to advance their desires. In general, conflict occurs in every life aspect within the family, the community, the organization, or even between countries.

Second, conflict is the main source of **destruction, disruption**, or escalation, or **conversely, advancement and renewal**. In reality, conflicts do not necessarily lead to negative consequences, but sometimes they can lead to positive outcomes. For instance, in cases of group-work and team-work in organizations, members hold different opinions and temperaments for making decisions on the basis of mutual fertilization and diversity. Despite disagreements between, they also can work together with high level of homogeneity. Thus, conflicts usually occur among people with different orientations, but they also can work together warmly.

Third**, the way used to deal with conflicts tends to have a destructive nature**. The typical way of dealing with conflict is derived from instinctive components of fight or flight. In some cases, the best way is to choose one of them, while in other cases combining the processes of resolving conflict can change the nature of situation from being destructive into constructive. Actually, this involves several informed methods and actions.

Fourth, **the conflict can have a realistic nature or unrealistic one**. In reality, most of the time people do not notice conflict, but they can figure out its

negative concrete consequences, such as a disagreement between delegations, sanctions by workers' committee, war between countries, or a complaint by a client. The conflict occurs when two parties or more perceive a situation as a conflict of interest. In other words, the conflict does not occur when one of the two parties does not view a situation as a convincing reason for conflict (Jeong, 2008).

Beside these four main characteristics, Rubin, Pruitt, and Kim (1994) stress three diverse aspects of conflicts. First conflict is characterized by the dynamic competitive nature in which all players fully understand the discrepancies or contests in their possible future positions. However, every party is obliged to take a contradictory position to the conscious interests of the other party. Second, directness and simplicity are two apparent features of conflict, especially when the situation is described as being overt or possible competition between parties involved. Third, conflict is seen as a struggle between desires and inclinations. It is a result of the differences between the motives, perceptions, goals, and aspirations of the parties involved, leading to adapting diverse policies that cause disputes.

3. Theories that tackle conflict in society

Moreover, the existing literature introduces different theories that tackle conflict in society. For instance, the Realist Conflict Theory emphasizes that when two parties or more attempt to have control over limited resources, features of conflict can occur, such as confrontations, negative stereotypical images, negative beliefs, or discrimination. In addition, not only conflict increases levels of hostility, but also causes ongoing hostility between parties involved. Conversely, negative beliefs and stereotypical images can be reduced when reducing levels of discrimination against others or when two parties or more look for higher levels of mutual goals which can be achieved throughout cooperation between participants involved. On other hand, the Realist Conflict Theory is very beneficial in clarifying

the negative discriminative aspects and prejudice that occur between people who compete to control the same resources.

Based on the principles of this theory, the economic and political power of parties can change the prejudices and hostile relations over time and place. However, this theory has several limitations. First, it fails to introduce convincing explanations for why prejudice is found among the members of the same group who are not in a state of actual conflict (Rubin, Pruitt and Kim, 1994). To conclude, conflict is an integral part of human life, either at the individual, family, or society levels. In addition, sometimes conflict is useful when it becomes a source of creativity, innovation, and personal development, especially in cases of competitions accompanying the conflict (Al-Krenawi, 2002).

Based on what is mentioned above, it can be argued that the main aim of conflict is not to harm others, so it does not have a negative nature. Conflict can simply be seen as the process of behaving in a certain way to serve the interests of a specific party. At the same time, the negative aspects of conflict can be figured out by the behaviors of conflicting parties, such as violence. From this, it becomes crystal clear that ***conflict management styles*** are a relevant topic for the study of interpersonal communications since the conflict outcomes and repercussions are greatly linked with management style of conflict.

Yanov (1992) introduces four main elements of conflict that have great impacts on the nature of conflict and the possible solutions presented: 1) conflict duration 2) participants' personalities 3) balance of power 4) decision-making process Al-Krenawi and Graham, 2001). Actually, these elements are with great importance during conflict management process to the degree that they should be addressed whenever choosing any management process to investigate a particular conflict.

4. Models of Conflict Management

Conflict management simply refers to the process of reducing the negative aspects of conflict, and at the same time enhancing the positive ones, aiming to sharpen learning process and group outcomes, including effectiveness and performance of organizational framework (Navidian, Bahari, and Kermansaravi 2014). In addition, some researchers claim that the meaning of "conflict management" and "conflict resolution" is three-folded, and give rise for the idea of fighting the conflict when the problems causing conflict arise (Shelton and Darling 2003). In brief, the views of researchers regarding conflict resolution vary in terms of attitudes towards models of conflict management and resolutions related to the interpersonal conflicts.

The phrase "Conflict Management Strategy" is used to refer to any activity used by a mediator or a disputant while attempting to resolve or deal with a conflict. To do so, they may use several formal instruments for overseeing the conflict, such as the **authorization of a third party, the mediation by a third party, or bargaining to introduce a judgment or arbitration on it**. Actually, mediation and arbitration are different. In mediation, the third party introduces recommendations only without any ability to make any judgment. In arbitration, the third party is able to introduce a suitable judgment that obliges parties in conflict. These procedures are seen as strategies for resolving the conflict after being chosen by a specific party to put an end for a conflict.

5. Basic patterns of conflict management

Moreover, five fundamental styles that reflect the person's characteristics and personality are introduced for managing any conflict. They are as follows: **Avoiding, Accommodating, Forcing, Collaborating /Problem-Solving), and Compromising.** In addition, conflict styles refer to specific conduct, stressing that

people tend to adopt when facing any circumstances that cause a conflict. Studies reflect that the adopted strategy clarifies the process of coordinating the person's worry based on his/her needs or necessities of others on a size of two: high and low.

5.1. Collaborating/Problems Solving – in this style, the main aim of resolving the problem is to introduce win-win resolution by coping and confronting the conflict directly to reach the best outcomes. Thus, this style concerns a lot in every party's gains and opponent. One of the most useful action strategies that provide high probability level for achieving the desires outcomes is collaboration in which its main aim is to reach a satisfying resolution for all parties. This strategy concerns on the achievements of the individuals as well as the other party being similarly high. Also, collaboration can be implemented in the shape of investigating the disagreements to reveal the needs and desires of each party as well as constraints, and difficulties faced.

5.2. Compromise – this style attempts to introduce a mutually-acceptable solution for all parties that have a specific degree of satisfaction. In this style, the medium-level concern is required for every one's opponent and gains. Also, the interest of each party is moderately stressed since this style is a kind of interim situation. In the light of this style, each party has the right to realize its interests and also has the desires to avoid the negative aspects of competition. Thus, compromise is fulfilled by achieving mutual consents. Sometimes, it is the easiest way to solve the conflict in the conditions of being seen as a fair solution for all parties. However, it can rise a feeling of frustration because none of the parties manage to achieve own interests (in this way, it can be the organizational loss over long time). Based on what is mentioned above, the highest probability to achieve the desired outcomes can be gained throughout the use of strategy of action in which a certain degree of individual's achievements as well as the other party's achievements being similar are taken into consideration. Moreover, compromise intermediates competition

strategy and withdrawal strategy. Its main aim is to introduce practical, acceptable, and satisfied solutions for all parties.

5.3. Forcing – in this style, win-lose outcome is achieved in most cases since the individual uses a specific perspective and tries to impose it on the other party. In this style, the main concerns are being imposed on gains, and are being reduced on people. Moreover, the assertiveness of an individual (meaning, self-concern) is stressed, while empathy (meaning, concern for others) is reduced. In addition, a sense of intimidation is promoted when warriors force others to accept their personal viewpoints throughout imposing competitive power tactics, such as arguments, accusations, insults, and violence. Finally, the highest probability of achieving the desired outcomes are introduced using this strategy of action when the individual's concerns are high, while the achievements of other party is very tow or even are not existent at all.

Competitive strategy refers to decisiveness and to the process of insisting the elaborated positions without any flexing to fully realize or listen to other party's positions. Thus, it simply means stressing one's rights without withdrawal. It also means the absolute protection of position believed to be correct by a person within convincing game rules to win (Jeong, 2008).

5.4. Avoiding – this style indicates the denial of the potential problem or the actual conflict. Following this style a lose-win outcome can be achieved since it requires low concerns in people and gains. In conflicting situation, people tend to reduce the importance associated with achieving their goals or the goals of the other side. They actually try to avoid conflict because going into a conflict is unpleasant, so all conflict parties are impatiently waiting conflict resolution by the conflict itself. The acceptable possibility is when the conflict is limited and insignificant, while the main problem is when the conflict is fundamental. In this case, avoidance

approach postpones the process of dealing with conflict into a later stage, and the danger stems from the low possibilities of reaching a resolution.

Thus, the highest probability for achieving the desired outcomes following this strategy of action is fulfilled when the individual's achievements are very high, whereas the other party's achievements are very low or non-existent.

Avoidance can be circumvented diplomatically, while postponing dealing with problems for more suitable time or leaving the threatening situation are good techniques (Jeong, 2008).

5.5. Accommodating – in this conflict management style, the emphasis is placed on the commonalities or points of strengths, whereas the differences and perspectives causing conflicts between parties are suppressed. The main concerns are placed here on people and are greatly reduced on gains. In addition, the highest probability of achieving the desired results is achieved when the individual's achievements are lowered to the non-existent level, whereas other party's achievements are increased. Moreover, accommodating means wavering which is an inverse strategy of competition. It is also a self-sacrifice strategy that entails neglecting one's desires to satisfy the other party's will. Based on the concerns of parties in conflict, Thomas had presented a model that combined parties' concerns for their interests (assertiveness) and concerns of the interests of those across the table (collaboration), yielding a specific management style (Thomas, 1974). He calls these styles yielding (low assertiveness / high collaboration), problem solving (high assertiveness / high collaboration), lack of action (low assertiveness / low collaboration) and coping (high assertiveness / low collaboration). In addition the preferred method is problem-solving whenever looking for mutually beneficial options (win – win).

Gottman explained that a conflict resolution method is not higher than another (Gottman, 1999). While some studies which analyzed the application of

management methods in intra-familial conflicts stated that parties are always coordinated. Thus, mostly parents use the same conflict management method. Yet, some researchers stated that the parties who use a regulated method are more satisfied with their relationship (Busby and Holman, 2009).

A similar study highlighted that the management method of forcing children to obey their parents' orders can be devastating to the intra-family relationships (Gottman 1993; Baptist et al., 2012). To that end, which are said to be that conflict management that suppose shared understanding and aspiration of solving problems with collaboration can be a competent device for conflict management.

6. Conclusions

In this article, some literature and theories regarding conflicts are presented. Its characteristics, strategies used and different styles of its management

- The conflict is realistic and inevitable, it could lead to destruction and could lead to renewal and development. The problem does not lie in the conflict itself, but rather in the way the conflict is resolved.

- The negative perception of conflict can be reduced when individuals search for common goals that can be achieved through cooperation rather than competition.

- There are different styles of conflict resolution, which reflects the characteristics of the person himself and his personality to manage the conflict.

- The best way to manage conflict within the family can be mutual understanding and cooperation, as forcing children to obey parental orders can destroy relationships within the family.

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