Do Personality Factors Affect The Conflict Resolution Styles Of A Manager?

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Abstract

One of the essential aspects of an organization's existence is conflict. One matter that needs to be taken into consideration in order to address this issue and mitigate the detrimental effects of workplace conflicts is conflict management. The purpose of this essay is to investigate the connection between preferred conflict resolution style and personality attributes. The Big Five Traits Model is chosen for personality evaluation. Extrovertism, conscientiousness, openness to new things, emotional stability, and agreeableness are the big five personality traits. The five styles of addressing conflicts include cooperating, avoiding, accommodating, competing, and compromising. This paper covers two personality traits Extraversion and Openness to experience and only two conflict-handling styles i.e. avoiding and competing. A total of 250 students are randomly selected for data collection. Description and correlation are used for analysis. This research paper discusses conflict resolution strategies as well as personality traits to get new experiences. Research findings indicate a strong correlation between an individual's personality type and the form of conflict resolution they choose. The report discusses both the practical and future research implications of the investigation.

Keywords: Personality, Conflict resolution

Introduction

Conflicts are one of the important parts of organizational life. The main parties of conflict are always human part of organization. These individuals are the most important asset of organization, as managing other resources is not possible without proper utilization of human resource. Human resource/s cause conflicts when they interact. Conflict handling is important for both organizations and employees. Organizations can get great returns, better utilization of resources, better outcomes, improved work environment and above all better future as a whole. On the other hand, employees can also reap more advantages with proper conflict handling style. Handling conflicts makes it possible for employees; to interact with others in proper way, to get work done and to do work properly with others in efficient

manner and to have better work life in organization. Individuals use various styles to handle conflicts, these styles vary individual to individual. Properly handling conflicts increases efficiency at both individual and group levels (Tjosvold, 1998).

Researchers have discussed conflict handling styles in different perspective and found that there are various determinants of selection of conflict handling styles; various researchers have given various findings. Like differences of conflict handling styles on the basis of gender, position in job, experience, age (Brhanam et al., 2005; Barrier & Chin, 2005; Polkinghorn & Byrne, 2001). Personality traits are one of the most important determinants of conflict management styles. Though there are various personality measurement models are available, but Big Five Personality Dimensions also known as Five Factor Model also known is one of the most widely studied and discussed model by researchers. Big five personality traits consist of five traits Extroversion, Agreeableness Openness to experience, Emotional stability and Conscientiousness (Robbins et al. 2008). Moberg (2001) found that big five factor model of personality has direct impact on the preferences of conflict handling style selection. This study is aimed to study the relation of personality type and what is preferred conflict handling style of university students (future managers). This study would be helpful to see what style of conflict handling students would prefer in future to handle work conflicts in their organization.

Literature Review

Conflict Resolution Style

Conflicts can't be avoided and most of us see it as a destructive process (Lindelow & Scott, 1989 cited in Mukhtar & Habib, 2010). How we perceive conflict, positive or negative, depends how conflicts are handled (Rahim, 1986). Handling work conflicts is beneficial for both employees and organization. Tidd & Friedman (2002) narrated that conflict handling reduces negative impact of conflict and uncertainty, and use of positive conflict handling style can mitigate and remove its effects. Rahim (2002) found, firms can be effective one if they manage and enhance conflict handling processes and the way they intervene. How conflict is handled is a response to scenarios present at work (Friedman et al. 2000). Properly handling conflicts increases efficiency at both individual and group levels (Tjosvold, 1998).

There are various models given by various researchers, like early models used to measure only one dimension of others concern i.e. cooperativeness and uncooperativeness (Deutsch, 1973). There are two dimensions of conflict handling self-interest (Assertiveness) and others concern (Cooperativeness) (Thomas & Kilmaan, 1974). This model has five factors, avoiding, accommodating, collaborating, compromising and competing. Individuals with high self-interest use either competing or collaborating styles, competing style maximizes individuals' gain on the cost of others while collaborating style is self-interest based but considering interests of others as well. Individuals with low self-concern adopt two styles; avoiding and accommodating style, avoiding style is used when individual neither prefers self-interest nor others interest, and accommodating style covers sacrificing self-interests for the sake of others benefits. Finally, compromising style is combination of both assertive and cooperative styles; it considers making efforts to solve conflicts.

Researcher Friedman, et al (2000) discussed that the way conflicts are handled may shape organizational environment, level of conflict and stress. Butler Jr. (1994) has discussed styles used by negotiators and found that those negotiators who use integrating (collaborating), obliging (accommodating) or avoiding style were more effective than those who use dominating (competing) style. Individuals who use integrative (collaborative style) conflict handling style experience lower level of work conflict and stress at job, but people using avoiding or dominating (competing) style were facing more conflicts and work stress (Friedman et al. 2000). Researchers have discussed conflict handling styles in different perspective and found that there are various determinants of selection of conflict handling styles; various researchers have given various findings. Like differences of conflict handling styles on the basis of gender, position in job, experience, age (Brahnam et al., 2005; Polkinghorn & Byrne, 2001).

Personality Traits

Personality traits are one of the most important determinants of conflict management styles. Though there are various personality measurement models are available, but Big Five Personality Dimensions also known as Five Factor Model also known is one of the most widely studied and discussed model by researchers. Researchers have found meaningfulness of big five personality traits, for example Moss & Ngu (2006) found meaningful relation of big five personality traits and on the job behaviors and outcomes. Big five personality traits consists of five traits Extroversion, Agreeableness, Openness to experience, Emotional stability, and Conscientiousness (Robbins et al. 2008).

Extroversion is "a personality dimension describing someone who is sociable, gregarious, and assertive". Agreeableness is "a personality dimension that describes someone who is good-natured, cooperative, and trusting". Conscientiousness is "a personality dimension that describes someone who is responsible, dependable, persistent, and organized". Emotional stability is "a personality dimension that characterizes someone as calm, self-confident, secure (positive) versus nervous, depressed, and insecure (negative). Openness to experience is "a personality dimension that characterizes someone in terms of imagination, sensitivity, and curiosity" (Robbins et al., 2008). Moberg (2001) found that big five factor model of personality has direct impact on the preferences of conflict handling style selection. Antonioni (1998) found that Extroversion, agreeableness, openness, and conscientiousness, are positively related with integrating (collaborating) style of conflict handling. Park & Antonioni (2007) found that personality traits like extraversion and agreeableness are having significant relation with conflict handling style.

This paper is based on the personality traits given by big five model of personality dimensions and preferred conflict handling styles used. Present study focused on the two personality traits i.e. extraversion and openness to experience are taken to study impact of personality traits on conflict handling styles. Therefore, researcher focused on the two conflict handling styles i.e. avoiding and competing for the research outputs.

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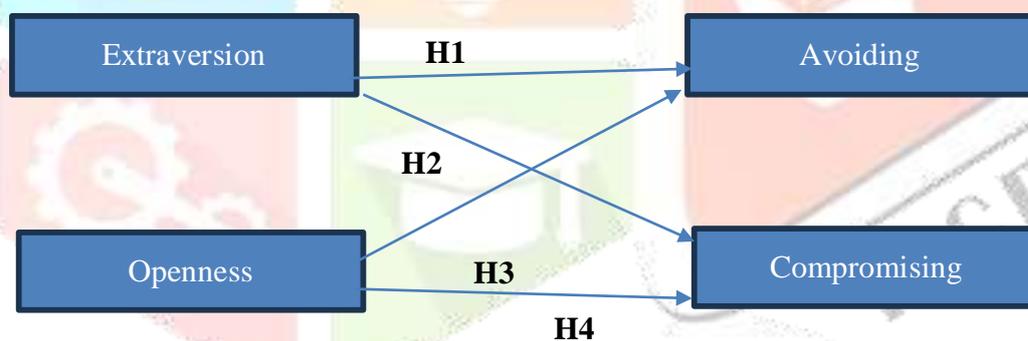
Research Model and Hypotheses

Figure 1: Research Model

H1: Extrovert people may prefer avoiding style to handle conflicts

H2: Extrovert people may prefer a compromising style to handle conflicts

H3: People with high openness to experience may prefer avoiding style to handle conflicts

H4: People with high openness to experience may prefer a compromising style to handle conflicts

Research Methodology

This study is designed to study conflict-handling styles that might be preferred by future managers. Relationship of personality and conflict management styles is also found. This study is designed to study conflict handling styles that might be preferred by future managers. Relationship of personality and conflict management styles is also found. University students were selected, future managers, for as population of the study. Only final year students were selected as they were going to join practical workforce in near future. 300 students were selected on the basis of cluster sampling from 3 public and 3 private sector universities. These universities were selected on simple random sampling basis. Personally administrated questionnaires were used to collect data. Questionnaire comprised of personality dimensions and preferred conflict handling styles. Data were analyzed using Microsoft Excel and SPSS 17.0.

Results and Findings

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

Constructs	Mean	SD	N
Extraversion	9.61	2.63	255
Openness to Experience	9.36	2.20	255
Avoiding	14.18	2.62	255
Compromising	14.95	1.91	255

Table 2: Correlation Matrix

Constructs	Extraversion	Openness to Experience	Avoiding	Compromising
Extraversion	1			
Openness to Experience	6.36	1		
Avoiding	3.15	2.62	1	
Compromising	4.95	1.91	1.91	1

Table 3: Regression Analysis

Hypotheses	Beta	t-value	Sig.
H1: Extraversion -> Avoiding	0.243	2.156	0.021
H2: Extraversion -> Compromising	0.531	1.990	0.001
H3: Openness to Experience -> Avoiding	0.325	2.436	0.005
H4: Openness to Experience -> Compromising	0.234	3.642	0.000

Table-1 shows descriptive statistics of the variables of interest. This means scores of the table show the type of personality and preference of style of the students. All the scores are above 9 the parameter, and any value above 9 shows that the students are extroverts and they are prone to experience, similarly, mean values of avoiding and compromising styles also show that preferable styles of conflict handling for students are avoiding and compromising.

The findings of Table-2 show scores of the correlation and Table 2 shows regression analysis. Findings of the table show that there is positive but insignificant relationship between extroversion and openness to experience, so it is not necessary that an individual who possesses an extraversion personality trait might not possess the trait of openness to experience (p>.10). Findings also suggest that individuals with extraversion personality trait their preferred style of conflict handling is compromising and they did use avoiding style of conflict handling (p<.05). On the other hand, individuals with openness to experience are also more inclined towards compromising style of conflict handling (p<.10). Thus, both the conflict resolution style is important for the students.

Discussion

This research aims to analyze the relationship between the big five personality factors Neuroticism, extraversion, agreeableness, openness, loyalty and marital adjustment with the conflict resolution style. The findings represent that there is a negative meaningful relationship between Neuroticism and marital adjustment. It means that being high in Neuroticism and its components like anxiety, aggression, shyness, depression, and vulnerability in one of the couples lead to a decrease the marital adjustment in him/ her and his/ her spouse. If these components are low in couples, their marital adjustment will increase. Fisher and McNulty (2008) concluded that Neuroticism in each of the couples (husband or wife) can predict divorce possibility and marital incompatibility. They also found out that Neuroticism is the strongest personality variable. The obtained results of the present research are consistent with previous research papers Gatis et al., (2004); White et al., (2004); Barelds, (2005); Zoby, (2005); Barelds & Bareldsdijkestra, (2006).

Findings show high neuroticism in one of the couples can decrease life enjoyment and marital adjustment in both. It leads to create the negative interactions and increase conflicts between couples. Neurotic people experience emotional turmoil such as failure, fear, guilty feeling chronically. Most probably, these negative features have negative impact on person in both intra-personal and extra-personal adjustment. Accordingly, high level of these factors can reduce marital adjustment (Bouchard *et al.*, 1999). The obtained results reveal that extraversion has a meaningful and positive relationship with marital adjustment. This hypothesis is confirmed. It means that high extraversion level and its components like intimacy, sociability, assertiveness, activity, excitant seeking and positive emotions in one of the couples can increase marital adjustment in couples and vice versa. Barelds, (2005) reported that there is a relationship between positive extraversion and marital life quality.

The obtained results of this research are consistent with Lester *et al.*, (1989), White *et al.*, (2004) studies. These results can be explained that having activity in people who are extraverted people, their

tendency to presence of others can be related to their needs to social support and it can affect on marital adjustment indirectly (Bouchard *et al.,* 1999). Having extraversion features such as sociability, loving others, having high energy and being optimist

are related to happiness. As a result, these people have marital adjustment and satisfaction. Results about agreeableness show that there is a positive and meaningful relationship between agreeableness and marital adjustment. It is consistent with the accomplished studies by White *et al*., (2004), Zoby (2005), Shachelford, Biserand & Goatez (2008). They pointed out the existence of agreeableness feature in persons are useful for their marriage. This agent is one of the inter-personal tendency dimensions and considered to be one of the positive features. People whom have high level agreeableness, they are ore healthy and more social than the others. These findings may mean that spouses whom are more social, they are willing to have stable and happier marriage.

Conclusion

Considering the findings of the study it can be concluded that the future managers (students) are having both extraversion personality trait and they are also prone to new experience. Similarly, they can use both avoiding and compromising style of conflict handling. But the findings of the Pearson correlation show that individuals with both extraversion and openness to experience prefer compromising over avoiding style of conflict handling. So, we can say that students are inclined towards keeping good terms with others and would try to use win-win or win-lose strategy, and they would like to maintain relations with others. Findings of the study have good future implementations, as employers can observe the personality traits of individual and can identify preferred style of conflict handling that might be used by students at work. They can then imagine work place relations, outcomes, performance and organizational effects of the personality and conflict handling.

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