

Ways in which people approach conflict management essay



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It will be a better way to explain the topic of stereotyping with the help of examples such as gender, age and race stereotype (Kreitner & Kinicki 2001).

Introduction

Brief overview of key themes in the essay and Evidence of information from other texts or journals.

In an organisation, people are considered one of the most important resources as they are the motivating force to success. For the organisation to excel in the business world, employees from different departments working together are inevitable as collective ideas and knowledge will not only optimize the usage of limited resources, it will also improve on the entire business operations to deliver both quality products and services to customers. Whilst working together as a team, there are bound to be differences in terms of ideas or views as people are unique in their own way and they may have different values, beliefs and cultures.

A common perspective from people is that conflicts usually results in a negative outcome to an organisation. However...

This essay will focus on some of the elements of a conflict, such as the different conflict approaches, strategies to resolve them and how the influence of culture would affect the conflict resolution styles.

Jones (2010) When two or more people, departments, or divisions compete for the same set of resources. This situation is likely to be disastrous because decision making is impossible when different people claim the right to control the same resources.

Main Discussion

Ways in which people approach conflict

As there is a wide range of possible reactions as well as causes to a conflict, it is essential for us to investigate the different approaches and determine if the responses would affect the organisation positively or negatively. Robbins (2008) suggested that through the areas of how cooperative and aggressive people would behave, we are able to identify the five different conflict approaches; they are mainly, Competing, Collaborating, Avoiding, Accommodating, and Compromising.

In avoiding, individuals would most likely prefer to take the easy way out by escaping from a conflict; Eunson (2008) explains that these individuals tend to believe that the other parties would be more capable in solving the problems without them. Similarly, accommodating individuals would also give in easily to disagreements. Furthermore, they may even make self-sacrifices in order to accomplish the goals of other parties (McShane, Olekalns & Travaglione 2010). Fu et al. (2008) commented that the accommodating behaviour is most commonly found in conflicts between bosses and subordinates, especially when bosses are known to be domineering.

In contrast, competing is considered one of the most aggressive behaviors among the five approaches. People who belong to this category tend to have little or no concerns for the other competing parties. Thus, Robbins (2008) defined them as individuals who would work at all cost to accomplish their own goals. Sometimes, even to the extent of pushing the blame to others

so as to prove that their solution is the best. However, Eunson (2008) argues that competing behavior may not be completely negative in a disagreement, this is because it may also be useful in situations which requires immediate decision making.

Even though every approach has its own pros and cons, I strongly believe that the two most optimistic approaches preferred by organizations would be collaborating and compromising. This is because; both approaches are fairly similar as they ensure that all parties have equal benefits and achievements with the least negative outcome. McShane, Olekalns & Travaglione (2010) also believes that individuals adopting the collaborating approach will be able to work together cohesively in finding the common solutions that will benefit all parties in the long run. Likewise, Robbins (2008) agrees that by giving in or providing fair distributions, compromising may be beneficial for all parties though it may be insufficient to appease the interest of everyone. Thus, due to the peaceful nature of both approaches, collaborating and compromising would be the better approach to conflict.

Strategies for conflict management

Three group of strategies that can help manage conflict

After having a better understanding of how people would approach conflict, we will now explore the different strategies in conflict management. In a research study, it was reported that different responses to conflict escalation could be both positive and negative. The positive effect could result in an accelerated rate of problem solving and understanding the reason behind the conflict. In contrast, the negative effect would not only hinder the

process of resolving conflict, it might also escalate to an dysfunctional stage (Ayoko 2007).

So in order to prevent the development of a dysfunctional conflict, organisations would usually apply strategies such as, increasing resources, focusing on a superordinate goal and improving communication.

Expanding Resources

One common problem faced by many organisations today is the allocation of scarce resources. Jones (2008) explains that due to the limited resources, unfair distributions are inevitable; tensions from a conflict would then escalate when different departments or individuals try to prove their values within the organisation, often with no regards of the other parties' interests.

In addition, these resources can be both tangible and intangible, for instance, they can be performance bonuses, new office space or even promotion opportunities (Eunson 2008). As a result, with the limited amount of resources allocated to different departments or individuals, many people working within the organisation would fight to get their fair share. A clear solution to solve this problem efficiently would be through the increment of resources. However, many organisations would decline such solution to be implemented due to budget constraints (McShane, Olekalns & Travaglione 2010)

Emphasising superordinate goal

As increasing resources might be a costly strategy for conflict management, another way of resolving conflict would be to focus on a superordinate goal.

This is because there may be a possibility of an escalating conflict when different departments or individuals are achieving different sets of goals. Thus, conflicting parties may try to achieve their own goals at the expenses of others (Jones 2008).

By focusing on a common goal, people would put aside their differences and divert their attention away from their individual or department's interests (McShane, Olekalns & Travaglione 2010). However, other than implementing a common goal for people to achieve, Eunson (2008) suggested that, by creating a common threat, it can be very motivational for people to work together cohesively as well. The reason behind his suggestion is because he believes that the best motivation for people to work together is intimidation. Thus, people would direct their attention away from conflict and towards the approaching threat.

In my opinion, with the implementation of superordinate goals, limited amount of scarce resources may no longer be a problem. This is because individuals would better utilize the scarce resources fairly among themselves and thus, diminishing the need for people to fight for their share.

Improving Communication and Understanding

Sometimes even after establishing a superordinate goal, it may not be sufficient to manage an unproductive conflict. McShane, Olekalns & Travaglione (2010) suggested that it will be easier to address the problem of communication after all competing parties have been put aside their differences. He added that by doing so, it will prevent the escalation of conflict from being out of control as well as giving all parties a chance to

intercommunicate with each other. Correspondingly, Eunson (2008) argues that with intercommunication between conflicting parties, it can help individuals or departments to be more tolerant with each other. However, there is also a chance that competing parties may also use the communicating channels to deceive or intimidate their competitors.

Cultural influences

The influence of culture in conflict resolution styles

As more organisations are working towards globalisation, many individuals from different backgrounds and cultures would have to work together and involve in satisfying different interests. Thus, it is important to identify the different cultural areas that may affect the approaches to conflict. These areas are mainly, Individualism and collectivism, power distance and high-low context communication method.

High-Low Context Communication Styles

McShane High-context cultures are more indirect in their speech styles and expect the

listener to Infer meaning from context. Those from low-context cultures are more direct,

and context play a limited role in clarifying meaning.

Those from high-context cultures are also more likely to use formal communication

channels and appeals to general principles and emotion strengthen their case. People

from low context cultures, by comparison, will be more informal in their communication

style and use logic and reason to build a case for their demands.

People from collectivist and high power-distance cultures are less comfortable with the

practice of resolving differences through direct and open communication.

(56) People in

Confucian cultures prefer an avoidance conflict management style because it is the

most consistent with harmony and face saving. Direct communication is a high-risk

strategy because it easily threatens the need to save face and maintain harmony.

George O. White Chinese partners operating in foreign ventures value harmony and avoid conflict at all costs because averting conflict is embedded in their Confucian values (Chew and Lim, 1995; Mavondo and Rodrigo, 2001).

George O. White TCE suggests a greater use of formal contracts and a regulatory strategy to manage conflict due to greater cultural understanding

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between partners (Lin and Germain, 1998; Pearce, 1997). Low cultural distance between partners leads to willingness and ability to agree to specific terms, with greater protective mechanisms in a formal contract in case a problem and/or conflict arises.

High context refers to societies or groups where people have close connections over a long period of time. Many aspects of cultural behavior are not made explicit because most members know what to do and what to think from years of interaction with each other. Your family is probably an example of a high context environment.

Low context refers to societies where people tend to have many connections but of shorter duration or for some specific reason. In these societies, cultural behavior and beliefs may need to be spelled out explicitly so that those coming into the cultural environment know how to behave.

High Context

Less verbally explicit communication, less written/formal information

More internalized understandings of what is communicated

Multiple cross-cutting ties and intersections with others

Long term relationships

Strong boundaries- who is accepted as belonging vs who is considered an “outsider”

Knowledge is situational, relational.

Decisions and activities focus around personal face-to-face relationships, often around a central person who has authority.

Examples:

Small religious congregations, a party with friends, family gatherings, expensive gourmet restaurants and neighborhood restaurants with a regular clientele, undergraduate on-campus friendships, regular pick-up games, hosting a friend in your home overnight.

Low Context

Rule oriented, people play by external rules

More knowledge is codified, public, external, and accessible.

Sequencing, separation-of time, of space, of activities, of relationships

More interpersonal connections of shorter duration

Knowledge is more often transferable

Task-centered. Decisions and activities focus around what needs to be done, division of responsibilities.

Examples:

large US airports, a chain supermarket, a cafeteria, a convenience store, sports where rules are clearly laid out, a motel.

Individualism and Collectivism

Baden 2008 individualism versus collectivism refers to the extent to which a person defines his or her identity according to group or separate and private values. Both concepts have positive and negative connotations.

Collectivist sentiments may help bind a country together so that everyone feels part of one big family, but equally such sentiments may be used by authoritarian governments to impose conformity and stifle dissent.

Mcshane Individualism and collectivism are distinct dimensions that shape our behavior. In negotiation, they affect the kinds of outcomes that people value. Cultures that are high on the collectivism dimension emphasize group goals and harmonious relationships within groups. This means that they are more attuned to social capital in negotiation, placing greater emphasis on how the negotiation process affects factors such as interpersonal liking and trust. In comparison, cultures that are high on individualism dimension emphasise personal goals. They are more attuned to economic capital and focus on deal making - the processes of creating and claiming value.

Power distance

(McShane) This describes the importance that people place on status and authority. Cultures that are classified as hierarchical have highly differentiated social structures, and power comes from social status. In contrast, egalitarian (characterized by belief in the equality of all people) cultures have flat social structures, and power comes from sources other than status. Negotiators from hierarchical cultures are likely to start negotiations by talking about their company and products - an indirect way

of signaling status and one that is often not recognized by egalitarian cultures.

Begley those high in power distance see little value attempting to influence decision making. Rather, they believe its superiors have the prerogative to make decisions without consulting subordinates. Low power distance subordinates, on the other hand, expect superiors to consult them (Lam et al., 2002) and approach superiors to express their views on matters of importance.

They have the opportunity to develop closer relationships with superiors than high power distance subordinates, who presume a safe distance from superiors to be appropriate.

Those low in power distance develop strong personal connections to authorities. As a result, they judge the legitimacy of authority actions by their relational fairness toward subordinates.

Baden 2008 power distance was a term originally used to describe organizational settings. In high power-distance settings, the organisation was quite hierarchical, employees feared disagreeing with superiors, and superiors tended to have more authoritarian decision-making styles. The society and the workplace. High power distance cultures tend to have a fair amount of inequality; and obedience and submissiveness are favoured.

Conclusion