



Relationship between Age Diversity and Conflict Management Styles in Organizations of Pakistan

Beenish Aqeel*
IQRA University Main Campus Karachi

Faisal Qadeer Qureshi*
IQRA University Main Campus Karachi

Ishtiaq Ahmed*
Bahria University Karachi Campus

ABSTRACT

Purpose: This paper validates previous research studies about the relationship between age diversity and conflict management styles.

Methodology/Sampling: A sample of 280 respondents belonging to different age groups working for various organizations of Pakistan, was taken into a survey, and asked several questions to understand the ways in which they manage conflicts in their organizations. The unrestricted non-probability sampling technique was used to select the respondents. The conflict management styles were split into five sub-exogenous variables, whereas it was assumed that all five management styles have a relationship with age diversity.

Findings: The results showed that extreme competitive management style has no relationship with age diversity, while the rest of the five styles, namely: accommodating style, collaborating style, avoiding style and compromising styles, all have relationship with age diversity. ANOVA (Analysis of variance) and Multiple Comparison tests were applied to analyze the data and test the hypotheses.

Practical Implications: Understanding the preferred conflict resolution style of different age groups amongst your subordinates and colleagues, could well serve as the key to successful resolution of conflicts. Students, teachers and researchers engaged in pursuing literature on organizational behavior, HRM, and organizational theory, would also benefit from this research.

Keywords: Age Diversity, Conflict Management Styles

Jel Classification: F23, M13

*The material presented by the author does not necessarily portray the viewpoint of the editors and the management of the Institute of Business & Technology (IBT)

- ¹ Beenish Aqeel :
² Faisal Qadeer Qureshi : faisalkqureshi@gmail.com
³ Ishtiaq Ahmed : ishtiaq@bimcs.edu.pk

© IBTJBS is published by the Institute of Business and Technology (IBT).
Main Ibrahim Hydri Road, Korangi Creek, Karachi-75190, Pakistan.

I. Introduction

Diversity in workplace is regarded as a competitive advantage among the workforce rather than a constraint. Diversity is further broken into multiple dimensions (found in workplaces): age diversity, race diversity, gender diversity, religious diversity, national diversity and so on.

Conflicts in organizations create negative atmosphere between two individuals or groups of people; it depends on the people involved as to which conflict style will be adopted during the conflicts. Accommodating style is used when harmony is a priority or when issue is not as important to one person as compared to the other, and can be avoided easily. This shows there is a lose/win situation where harmony wins and conflict loses.

Avoiding styles has loosing situation from both ends; it is appropriate when anger and aggression are at peak and temporary measures are taken by people to avoid conflict. Collaborating style has a win-win situation for both parties, where people do not give importance to the argument or issue, and try to meet the requirements of all parties with everyone's consensus.

In compromising style, both parties have to give up at any cost so everyone's requirements can be met; so there exists a lose-lose situation at both ends. Whereas, competing style refers to the situation where aggressive attitude has to take place among people and there is a win-lose situation for conflicts and harmony. This style is mostly used when resources are scarce and people need efficiency to utilize those scarce resources.

Age diversity basically means employees from different age groups working in the same organization. Based on the studies conducted earlier in this field, there are many factors that result in conflict within organizations apart from disagreements; nowadays, one major factor is age diversity combined with different educational backgrounds, perceptions, experiences, technological know-how and performance methods.

Problem Statement

To study and find the relationship between age diversity with respect to different age-groups of managers (and employees) within the same organization where managers are using different conflict management styles like accommodating, compromising, competing, avoiding and collaborating.

Hypotheses of the Study

H1: There is a relationship between age diversity and competing style of conflict management.

H2: There is a relationship between age diversity and avoiding style of conflict management.

H3: There is a relationship between age diversity and accommodating style of conflict management.

H4: There is a relationship between age diversity and collaborating style of conflict management.

H5: There is a relationship between age diversity and compromising style of conflict management.

II. Literature Review

Rahim (2002) examined the need for intervention and types of interventions through substantive and affective conflicts for interpersonal, intergroup and intra-groups. The study designed the intervention in a way that what management styles (integrating, accommodating, compromising, obliging and avoiding) were appropriate in handling the conflicts according to the situation and circumstances. The paradox of conflict explained an inverse relation between organizational effectiveness and conflicts. Cases, videos, lectures and exercises had been used for conflict management styles and with the help of many other matrices the results were concluded. Organizations cannot be reduced or suppressed but they must be managed properly by the management and effective conflicts must also result positively for learning organizations.

Simons & Peterson (2000) discussed two major types of conflicts; task conflicts (effective decisions) and relationship conflicts (poor decisions). In this study moderate relation between task conflict and relationship conflict among the managers were the major concerns. One hundred chief executive officers were selected from the directory of America's top hotels and motels to participate in this survey of conflicts. With the help of the factor analysis data, inter-correlation was used to find the relation among both the variables and regression analysis was used to find the moderate relation. It was concluded from both the statistical tools that both the conflicts have positive relation among each other. Furthermore it was found that conflicts are moving towards aggressiveness among the sub-ordinates and leading towards more and more conflicts among each other and increasing the rate of attrition as well.

Thomas (1992) worked on various types of conflict and most importantly how to handle these types of conflicts with different management and age groups. Number of years and candidates were taken into account to test the possibilities and multiple matrixes with different models to analyze the data. Structural, process model and conflict management models or conflict handling model (time of frame and choice of beneficiary) were used as the tool for testing the data and the final results concluded that in conflict management cognitive theory dealt with the short term conflicts whereas collaborative theory had solved major conflicts and most of the conflict management problems. The end results clearly showed that conflicts must be resolved as soon as they had occurred because when they were stretched or delayed it had created more problems and became more difficult to be managed by the management.

Kim, Wang, Kondo and Kim (2007) explained the interpersonal conflicts among the supervisors and the organization's culture being affected due to the different conflict management styles in Japan, China and Korean. A sample consisting of 275 individuals was involved from the three countries and with the help of regression analysis and A-matrix techniques were used to evaluate the data. Different conflict styles were derived and found that in Korea compromising management style is used as compared to China and Japan, Japanese were found to be less dominating then rest of the two countries. In this study not only management styles were discussed but also how individuals seek for their desired goals with the different management styles.

The various diversities like age, gender, race, income level and demographics in the dynamic organization environments were found. To collect the data many groups were developed hypothetically according to the diversity variables and it was gathered from the people who had served in companies for more than 20 years. To test the different

hypothesis of diversities regression analysis and correlation were used for the evaluation. The results of the hypothesis clearly showed that diversity in terms of demographic had become source for task conflicts, creativity and interpersonal conflicts (Lau & Murnighan, 1998).

De Dreu and Van Vianen (2001) examined the relation between teams and conflict management styles and the reaction of team members towards conflict with the other teams and among the team members. For the data collection, a large number of heterogeneous teams were taken into the sample. The results revealed that when teams adopted collaborating and contending styles of conflict management it resulted negatively to the productivity and effectiveness of the entire team, affected the team performance and team functioning (compliance, voice and helping behavior) negatively. It was suggested that team members and the leaders must use the avoiding management style within the team so that conflicts can be avoided and team can be more productive with effective team functions.

Rahim (1983) worked on the five styles of conflict management (integrating, dominating, compromising, avoiding and obliging) to check the validity and reliability and to find out which style can minimize the conflict among the peers, sub-ordinates and supervisors. A total of 98 individuals were collected in which 60 were MBA students and 38 were managers. Correlation and chi-square were used to test the hypothesis and it was evaluated that compromising, dominating and obliging had affected negatively among the supervisors and peers whereas avoiding and integrating resulted positively among them. This clearly showed that supervisors and peers must be in avoiding and integrating styles so that it can result in more productivity.

The age discrimination environment in organization and the performance of the employees were notified. In this study data was gathered from 164 organizations and a total of 8651 employees were taken as sample to provide the data with their perceptions on age diversity and commitment with the organization. Confirmatory factor analysis was used to assemble the data and with the help of mean and bivariate correlation variables were presented and evaluated. In the end it was concluded that age diversity was flexible enough with the organizational culture but from performance aspect age diversity had shown negative impact. The performance of individuals and over all organization had depreciated due to age diversity in the organization (Kunze, Boehm & Brunch, 2011).

According to Martens, Lambrechts, Manshoven and Vandenberg (2006), in Belgium old age employees had very low employment level due to the issues made by many stakeholders since 35 years. The study concentrated on the three variables process, contents and meaning and concluded that the importance of the process and meaning are equal for the people. Sample was collected from Belgium organizations from both employees and employers. The results showed that it is necessary to have age diversity in organizations because different age people have different perceptions, learning skills, abilities, experience and different educational backgrounds through which they can help and support each other in this dynamic situations.

The study conducted to examine the age related differences and it had been assumed that old age individuals had low productivity then young ones. Performance had been described in terms of cognitive performance which included time limit and simultaneity. The sample of 221 adults and age brackets between 20 to 80 years and survey was

conducted on speed test with paper and pencils. After summing up the results of the speed test old and young individuals were separated and mean and standard deviations were drawn. The result revealed that as the individual's age increased the level of speed started to fall as well, so there was inverse relation between increasing age and speed (Salthouse, 1996).

III. Research Methods

Methods of data collection

This study adopts quantitative research paradigms and the author mainly used questionnaire as the major source of gathering data for the research. Data collection was smooth and questionnaires were included for all possible for data analysis. Data was collected from different managers, supervisors and employees of different ages from multiple organizations in Karachi, Pakistan and it was assumed that these observations are the true representative of entire population.

Sampling technique

The unrestricted non-probability sampling technique was used where the subjects were chosen based on the easy accessibility to the researcher.

Sample size

Respondents of this research study are the managers, supervisors and employers from recent different organizations in Karachi. Questionnaires were given to 280 respondents who are currently working.

Instrument of data collection

Data was collected through self-administrated questionnaire from different people working in different organizations. Nature of questions was closed ended with likert scale of 1 to 6 were used to record the response of the sample.

Statistical technique

Statistical technique used in this research is ANOVA.

IV. Results

The relationship between the variables was categorical that included both nominal and ordinal scales. Summed up findings obtained that almost all the hypotheses were confirmed and revealed that there is a relationship between age diversity and conflict management styles. It was mentioned earlier that five types of conflict management style have been considered and seven age groups were tested. For further detailed analysis multiple comparison models were used. Competing management style had a significant value of 0.233 relation with age diversity, avoiding management style had a significant value of 0.011. Accommodating management style had a significant value of 0.009, whereas compromising management style had a significant value of 0.029. Finally, collaborating management style had a significant value of 0.000 in relation with Age Diversity. It means that one of the predictors, i.e. competing management style, is not significant while rest of the five predictors: avoiding, accommodating, compromising and collaborating management styles, were found to be significant. To find out the relation among the groups individually, multiple comparison models were used. In competing management style all the groups were insignificant and no relation

was found among the groups which showed that none of the groups was responsive towards competing management style. In avoiding management style, relationship among all the age groups was insignificant except 46-52 age group, which showed significant values (0.01, 0.01, 0.04, 0.017 and 0.003), and age group of 53-59, having significant value of 0.003 but a negative mean value (-1.3200) in relation with age group 46-52; which shows that 46-52 age group was more responsive towards avoiding management style than other groups. In accommodating management style all the groups were insignificant except the age group of 46-52, having significant values (0.001, 0.00, 0.002, 0.022 and 0.012), and was more responsive to accommodating management style than rest of the age groups. In collaborating management style 53-59 showed significant values (0.001, 0.001, 0.007, 0.003, 0.037 and 0.026), while rest of the groups were insignificant; which showed that 53-59 age group was more responsive towards collaborating management style than rest of the groups. In compromising management style the age group 25-31 showed significant value of 0.006 in relation with age group 32-38; the age group of 39-45 having significant value of 0.006 in relation with age group 25-31; and the age group of 46-52 having significant values (0.000, 0.000, 0.000, 0.015, 0.012 & 0.029) in relation with all the other groups. These results showed that many of the age groups were responsive towards compromising management style.

V. Conclusion

Results revealed that predictors (avoiding management style, accommodating management style, collaborating management style and compromising management style) have positive relation with age diversity, indicating that four conflict management styles are found in different age groups which is highly dependent on situation, perception and experience. It was also found that competing management style had no relation with age diversity, as this style was not found in any of the age groups.

Implications

This research should have broad implications for managers at all levels of the organizational hierarchy. Understanding the preferred conflict resolution style of different age groups amongst your subordinates and colleagues, could well serve as the key to successful resolution of conflicts. Students, teachers and researchers engaged in pursuing literature on organizational behavior, HRM, and organizational theory, would also benefit from this research.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT:

This research was partially supported by Iqra University Main Campus Karachi, Pakistan. I thank to my colleagues who provided insight and expertise that greatly assisted the research, although they may not agree with all of the interpretations of this paper. I also thank to Mr. Faisal Qadeer Qureshi from IQRA University Main Campus Karachi and Mr. Ishtiaq Ahmed from Bahria University Karachi Campus for assistance with particular technique, methodology, for comments that greatly improved the manuscript.

I would also like to show our gratitude to my institute of business & technology, Karachi,

Pakistan for sharing their pearls of wisdom with us during the course of this research. I am also thankful to (Mr. Faisal Qadeer Qureshi and Mr. Ishtiaq Ahmed) for their comments on an earlier version of the manuscript.

References

- Dreu, C. K. W. & Van, A. E. M. (2001). Managing relationship conflict and the effectiveness of organizational teams. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 22 (3), 309-328.
- Florian, K., Stephan, A. B. & Heike B. (2011). Age diversity, age discrimination climate and performance consequences—A cross organizational study. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 32, 264-290.
- Kim, T., Wang, C., Kondo, M. & Kim, T. (2007). Conflict management styles: the differences among the Chinese, Japanese, and Koreans. *International Journal of Conflict Management*, 18 (1), 23-41.
- Kunze, F., Boehm, S. A. & Brunch, H. (1998). Demographic Diversity and Fault lines: The Compositional Dynamics of Organizational Groups. *Acad Manage Review*, 23 (2), 325-340.
- Martens, H., Lambrechts, F., Manshoven, J. & Vandenberg, A. (2006). An organizational development approach towards age diversity practices in Belgian organizations. *Ageing International*, 31 (1), 1-23.
- Rahim, M. A. (1983). A Measure of Styles of Handling Interpersonal Conflict. *The Academy of Management Journal*, 26 (2), 368-376.
- Rahim, M. A. (2002). Towards a theory of managing organizational conflict. *The International journal of Conflict Management*, 13 (3), 206-235.
- Salthouse, T. A. (1996). The processing-speed theory of adult age difference in cognition. *Psychological Review*, 103 (3), 403-428.
- Simons, T. L. & Peterson, R. S. (2000). Task Conflict and Relationship Conflict in Top Management Teams: The Pivotal Role of Intragroup Trust. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 83 (1), 102-111.
- Thomas, K. W. (1992). Conflict and Conflict Management: Reflections and Update. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 13 (3), 265-274.

APPENDIX: TABLES

Table 1

Competing Management Style

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	4.059	6	0.676	1.356	0.233
Within Groups	136.192	273	0.499		
Total	140.251	279			

Avoiding Management Style

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	7.459	6	1.243	2.81	0.011
Within Groups	120.77	273	0.442		
Total	128.228	279			

Accommodating Management Style

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	8.3	6	1.383	2.928	0.009
Within Groups	128.973	273	0.472		
Total	137.273	279			

Collaborating Management Style

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	11.268	6	1.878	2.388	0.029
Within Groups	214.695	273	0.786		
Total	225.963	279			

Compromising Management Style

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	13.889	6	2.315	4.322	0
Within Groups	146.22	273	0.536		
Total	160.11	279			

Table 2

Hypotheses Assessment Summary

Hypotheses	Sig. Value	F	Empirical Conclusion
There is relation between age diversity and competing style of conflict management.	0.233	1.356	Rejected
There is relation between age diversity and avoiding style of conflict management.	0.011	2.810	Accepted
There is relation between age diversity and accommodating style of conflict management.	0.009	2.928	Accepted
There is relation between age diversity and collaborating style of conflict management.	0.029	2.388	Accepted
There is relation between age diversity and compromising style of conflict management.	0.000	4.322	Accepted