



Research Article

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Managing Organizational Conflicts: A Study among Organizations in Kosovo

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Abstract

Organizations and managers during their organizational activities, not rarely face different conflicts. Managers, depending on their gender, use different ways to resolve these conflicts while this reflects on their subordinates. The purpose of this study is to analyse the most common approaches applied to resolve conflicts in organizations in Kosovo and the impact of gender on the choice of style to handle conflicts. The study employs a quantitative approach whilst convenience sampling method is used for the purpose of selecting respondents. The study is conducted in ten largest companies in Kosovo in which hundred employees and fifty managers were included. A structured questionnaire is used to collect primary data and necessary tests were conducted through SPSS. Results reveal that managers use the integrative style more than other styles during the conflict management process; gender partially affects the choice of the style and the style of conflict management affects the likelihood of managers among employees. The study suggests that the field of conflict management among organizations in Kosovo needs more academic research.

Keywords: organization, managers, conflict, styles, Kosovo

1. Introduction

Conflicts in organizations have existed and will continue to exist. Some see conflict as dysfunctional and counterproductive which should be avoided at all costs while others perceive as an opportunity for personal growth and a phenomenon that requires management (Deutsch, 1973). Handling conflicts is one of the most difficult aspects of a manager's responsibilities. In view of this, it is of utmost importance for managers to be aware of the sources of conflict and conscious how to manage them effectively (Fleetwood, 1987).

This paper is another attempt to contribute to the existing literature in this discourse. Practically, the study is focused on conflict management practices in some of the largest organizations operating in Kosovo's market. The research analyses the impact of gender on the choice of management style. Specifically, the study addresses two major questions; which style of managing conflicts managers use most, and is there any difference between female and male managers in choosing the style of handling conflicts?

2. Literature Review

Theories of conflicts according to Borisoff and Victor (1998) have roots mainly in the field of business, sociology, and psychology. According to Green (2012) there are generally four types of organizational conflicts; interpersonal conflicts where sources can be personal dislikes or personality differences (Jones & George, 2008), intragroup conflicts which can be related to ethnic, religious, gender biases and various personality differences (Jones & George, 2008), intergroup conflicts which may arise from differences among groups, teams and departments as a result of changes in status or contradictory goals of groups (Green, 2012) and which is difficult for managers to eliminate but they should not ignore (Kinicki & Kreitner, 2008) and interorganizational conflict which is a larger scope of conflicts among organizations (Jones and George 2008).

2.1 Organizational conflicts and Agency Theory

The highest level of conflicts in organizations consists of the conflict at the top management level and the owners. Relationship between corporate owners, board of directors, respectively the supervisory board and managers are based on the theory of agency or model "Principal & Agent" (Tang, 2011). The rapport between the owner and the manager is mainly related to the selection and implementation of the contracts (Jensen & Meckling, 1976; Hill & Jones, 1992; Hart, 1995).

2.2 Sources of conflict

The vast majority of literature indicate organizational structure (Taylor, 1991; Jaffe, 2000) scarce resources, task interdependency, goal differences (Augsburger, 1992) personality differences (Baron, 1989) and communication problems (Jargon, Karnitschnig, & Lublin, 2008) as most common sources of organizational conflicts as depicted in the following figure:

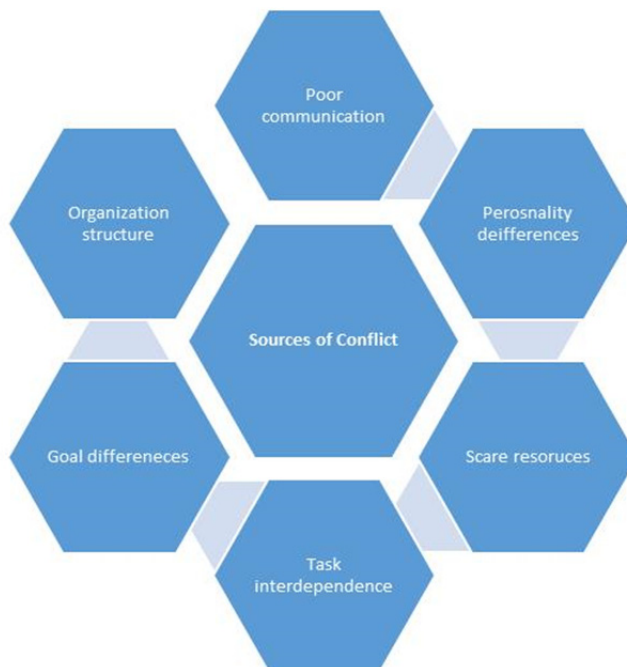


Figure 1. Sources of Conflict
Source: Bauer & Erdogan (2012)

2.3 Conflict management styles

Blake and Mouton (1964) claim that conflicts in organizations can be managed in different ways. The most common model consists of five basic styles which includes avoiding, dominating, integrating, obliging and compromising as illustrated in the figure below:

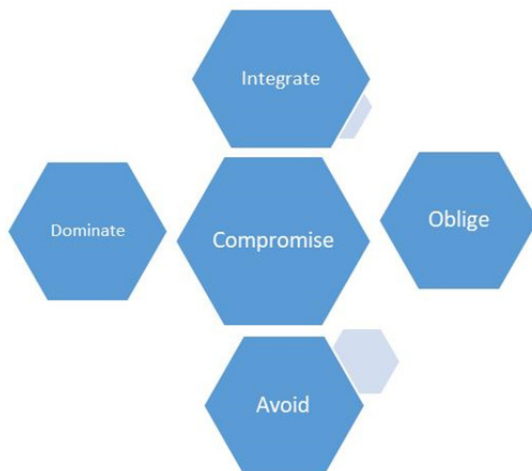


Figure 2: Conflict management model

Source: Rahim & Bonoma (1979)

2.4 Factors affecting the choice of style in managing conflicts

2.4.1 Gender

Gender is considered an important variable in many studies regarding the style of conflict management. Korabik, Baril & Watson (1993) argue that there is no difference between men and women in handling organizational conflicts. However, other studies have explored important impact of gender differences on the style of conflict management. According to Carter (1999) ethnicity and gender greatly influence the style of handling conflicts. Hignite, Margavio and Chin (2002) in a study involving 225 students have also found that gender causes some significant differences in the use of conflict resolution styles.

Rahim (1983) suggests that women have a more collaborative approach to conflict management than men. Hignite (2002) also notes that women tend to use more collaborative style than men. Likewise, Hafcrkamp (1991) suggests that women were more likely to use collaborative strategies compared to men who tend to use more avoiding approach. Thomas & Schaubhut, (2008), found that males result significantly higher in competition at all different organizational levels.

2.4.2 Age

Krumov, Ilieva and Karabeliov (1997) in their research among some organizations in Bulgaria, found that the age does not have an impact on conflict management style. Likewise, Konovsky, Baril, & Watson (1998) in their study among 603 individuals found that age differences did not affect conflict management resolution styles. Al-Ajmi (2007) also shows that there are no significant age differences over the use of conflict management styles. On the other hand, McKenna and Richardson (1995), Hignite (2002) and Yan and Sorenson (2004) note that age differences have an impact on the usage of management conflict resolution styles.

3. Research Methodology

The study employs a quantitative approach whilst due to the availability of researchers to collect data, convenient sampling method is used to collect data. A number of self-administered questionnaires were distributed to companies involved in the study. The study included managers and employees from ten largest companies operating in the private sector in Kosovo. Since these organizations employ the largest number of employees, researchers believe that the possibility of organizational conflicts is greater. Consequently, their management requirements are inevitable and the styles that managers use in resolving conflicts have remained unexamined. Participants were regular staff of the following organizations:

1. Devolli Corporation
2. BUQAJ Corporation
3. MERIDIAN Corporation
4. EMONA Group
5. UNION Group
6. VIPA Chips
7. Tre Pharm
8. FLUIDI
9. RUGOVE
10. ELKOS Group

In total, 150 questionnaires were distributed, consisting of five (5) managers and ten (10) employees in each company, thus totalling to 50 managers and 100 employees. The questionnaires were completed in the branches of these companies operating in the capital city, Prishtina.

Two sets of questionnaires were used for data collection purposes. One was designed for managers and another for employees. To increase the response rate all questionnaires were distributed in a print copy format. Managers were provided with the Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory-II questionnaire. This questionnaire is designed to identify the individual's tendency to solve problems with employees, as avoiding, compromising, obligating, dominant or integrative. The two basic dimensions used to differentiate styles were: "self-concern" and "concern for others". The instrument was made up of 28 questions, with 5 Likert scales ranging from not satisfied to very satisfied.

On the other hand, employees have completed the questionnaire of Reysen Likeability Scale (Reysen, 2005), which is designed to measure the likelihood of the subject. The questionnaire included the factors of attraction described by Chaiken and Eagly (1983) in one factor. The questionnaire was made up of 11 questions, with 7 Likert scale; from very unsatisfied to very satisfied.

Dissemination of questionnaires, their completion and collection lasted for two weeks with 10 working days. One of the researchers was present in all organizations to provide any eventual clarification while respondents completed questionnaires. Questionnaires were mostly completed from 10:30-11:30am, as this was the most appropriate time when respondents had the most time and willingness to participate in the research. While distributing questionnaires and collecting data, some of the managers were not in the company premises and were expected to wait until they returned. To ensure confidentiality, all respondents were ensured by researchers that the study will be used only for academic purposes and that their personal data were completely confidential.

4. Results and Discussion

The demographic data of managers involved in the study resulted in 54% of the age group between 31-40, 14% of the age group 41-50 and 32% of respondents were older than 50 years. Hence, the majority of managers belonged to the age group of 31-40 years. As far as gender is concerned, 22% of managers were women while the overwhelming majority (78%) were male. This resulted in total of 11 female managers and 39 men. Regarding their level of education, 14% had higher/university education qualification and 86% held master degree, as shown in the following table:

Table 1: Age, gender and education level of respondents

		Frequency	Percentage
Age	31-40	27	54.0
	41-50	7	14.0
	over 50	16	32.0
	Total	50	100.0
Gender	Female	11	22.0
	Male	39	78.0
	Total	50	100.0
Education	University	7	14.0
	Master	43	86.0
	Total	50	100.0

Source: authors' calculations

The following table presents the descriptive statistics of conflict management styles from managers in the companies involved in the study:

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics

Style	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Integrative	50	31.1800	1.24031
Obligate	50	20.8800	2.49604
Avoid	50	21.5600	.95105
Compromise	50	11.6800	2.30740
Dominant	50	24.6800	.55107

Source: authors' calculations

Figures in the table above depict that in average, integrative style tends to be favoured by organizational managers ($M = 31.18$, $Sd = 1.24$), followed by the dominant style ($M = 24.68$, $Sd = .55$). Thus, according to the assessment, it is noticed that managers use the integrative style more than other styles during the conflict management process. The lowest average style appears in the average compromising style ($M = 11.68$, $Sd = 2.3$). From the data it turns out that the claim that dominant style is the most used style of conflict management managers is not statistically supported.

Table below presents results of the tests whether there is a gender difference between male and female managers in choosing managerial style to manage conflicts:

Table 3. Gender differences among managers

T-test for equality of means			
Style	t	df	Sig.(2-tailed)
Integrative	-1.676	48	.100*
Obligate	-3.419	34.288	.002
Avoid	-2.917	24.857	.007
Compromise	-5.037	47.974	.000
Dominant	.319	48	.751*

*Sig.(2-tailed) > 0.05 statistically significant

Source: authors' calculations

As shown in the table above, results of the study depict that some styles do not have any significant

statistical correlation with gender of managers. This implies, for example, that the integrative style is used by both female and male managers. Hence, gender does not seem to be an important determinant of the integrative style used by managers. Results reveal the same direction regarding the dominant style.

Results on the other hand, show that there is an important statistical difference ($p = .002$) regarding the use of obligatory style between male and female managers. Results from the table above show that male managers tend to use more obligatory style ($M = 21.3$) than their female counterparts ($M = 19.3$). Regarding avoiding style, results show that male managers prefer slightly more avoiding style ($M = 21.7$) than female managers with an average $M = 21$.

Unlike avoid style, the usage of compromising style shows a significant statistical relation ($p = .000$) between male and female managers with mean differences of $M = 12$ and $M = 10$, respectively.

It may be concluded that results only partially support the claim that gender has an impact in the choice of conflict management style. This is in line with the supporting results of Rahim (1983a); Hignite, Margavio and Chin (2002); Hignite (2002) and Thomas and Schaubht (2008).

5. Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to analyse approaches of dealing with conflict in selected Kosovo organizations. Research analysed what is the most frequently used style by managers to resolve organizational conflicts and whether gender affects the choice of this style. Ten largest organizations in Kosovo involving a total of 150 participants were selected for the study. Of these, 5 managers and 10 employees in each company. Results reveal a partial relation between managers' gender and the choice of style to manage organizational conflicts.

5.1 Research limitations

Researchers believe that a larger sample could have been involved in the study, however, considering the time and costs involved, this was the highest number that could be included in the study. A greater number of participants would add value to findings and results of the research.

Secondly, since data were collected during the working hours at the work premises, respondents may have given moderate responses because of suspicion that they are being surveyed or that their responses will be communicated to managers at a later time. However, researchers have attempted to ensure that all data will be used solely for study purposes.

Finally, this study collected data at a specific time. A longitudinal study that would collect data from same participants over time and analyse this situation would add value to the research.

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