

The Potential Differences of Interpersonal Conflict Management Styles between Saudi and American Students studying in USA when Dealing with Conflict

Hassen Hussain Altalhi
Management Science Department
Yanbu University College, Yanbu Industrial City, Saudi Arabia
altalhih@rcyci.edu.sa; hassenhumaidi@hotmail.com

Abstract

This research paper explores the conflict management styles of Saudi and American students who pursued their education in the United States. The researcher used online survey questionnaire for collecting data and 200 Saudi and American students participated in this study. The study utilized quantitative methods for analyzing the data collection. Findings showed that there were significant differences between the two groups in terms of conflict management styles. This slight variation was due to individualistic collectivistic cultural background.

Key words: interpersonal, conflict management, styles, inter-organizational conflicts, dysfunctional, intragroup and intergroup.

Introduction

This paper examines the conflict management styles of both Saudi and American students who studied in United States of America. Intercommunication among individualistic and collectivistic cultures may create interpersonal conflicts, which are tending to drive the inclinations of choosing their conflict management styles of both counterparts in educational settings. The

study utilizes the Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory-II (ROCI-II) that comprises of 28 items (Rahim, 1983). Random sampling has been used from 200 participants, 100 Saudi students and 100 American students at a university level of undergrad as well as graduate students who are presently pursuing their education specifically in South Florida. The data gathering is evaluated and analyzed via SPSS through employing Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA).

The two groups of Saudi and American students have experienced a different cultural background which could influence their behaviors in regards to managing or resolving any conflict scenario. Cultural dimensions such collectivistic and individualistic could shape individuals conflict management modes. Hofstede (1984) came up with five cultural dimensions such as power distance, collectivism verses individualism, masculinity verses femininity, long-term and short-term orientation and uncertainty avoidance. These dimensions vary from culture to culture.

Literature Review

Organizations are more vulnerable to conflict than ever before. Whenever individuals are involved in work situations; conflict is inevitable and can happen anytime and anywhere within the corporation. No organization is immune from internal conflict. Individuals of diverse cultural backgrounds have more propensities to generate conflict or dispute due to varying factors (Bachanan and Huczynski, 2004). These factors can include the lack of proper communication due to language difference/understanding, different cultural background and varied work experiences across national boundaries. Thus, conflict is an expected struggle between at least two interdependent parties who perceived incompatible goals. Conflict may have an impact on the overall cross functional business processes of most organizations. Research

studies indicate that a manager or a leader spends as much as 30% of his/her work time dealing with workplace conflict (Thomas and Schmidt, 1976).

Sources of conflicts are related to many variables such as incompatible goals, overlapped authority, scarce resources, reward systems, status inconsistency and task interdependencies (Jones and George, 2006). In this regards, there are three levels of conflict which are: organization, group and individual (Schermerhorn, Hunt and Osborn (2006). Furthermore, there are numerous types of conflict such as interpersonal, intrapersonal, intergroup, intragroup and inter-organizational conflicts. Conflicts can be functional or dysfunctional and leaders have to be aware of conflict impacts and consequences. Generally speaking, there are potential costs and benefits of conflicts. A conflict analyst or a practitioner may employ some of the western models such conflict management styles, arbitration, mediation and negotiation in order to resolve or manage conflict before it escalates.

Based on the variation between individualistic and collectivistic cultural dimensions, interpersonal conflict management styles can be utilized differently due to cultural background and cultural differences. When Arab students lived in USA and brought up in American culture for a long time, they could come up subculture. Similarly, American students who live in Arab culture, they could acquire some of the collectivistic culture.

Results and Findings

The results show significant distinctions between Saudi and American students in terms of obliging and the compromising management styles. In terms of the medium, the Saudi partakers were revealed to have a higher preference for the obliging and the avoiding styles than

their American mates. However, the American participators were noticed to have a higher preference for the integrating, the dominating, and the compromising styles.

Saudi students were noticed to be more avoiding than American students in the favored of conflict modes. The multivariate analysis for avoiding style was not significant with the alpha of 0.447. However, American students were noted to be more compromising, on average, than Saudi students. Also, American students were noted to prefer integrating styles at the alpha of 0.359. On the other hand, Saudi students were, on the average, more obliging than American students at alpha of 0.009. In terms of dominating modes, American students were more dominating than Saudi students at the alpha of 0.320.

Conclusion

This paper has explored slight variations between Saudi and American students studying in the USA in terms of interpersonal conflict management styles when managing a conflict situation. The results seem to suggest that there are significant distinctions between Saudi and American students in terms of obliging and the compromising management styles. In terms of the medium, the Saudi partakers were revealed to have a higher preference for the obliging and the avoiding styles than their American mates. However, the American participators were noticed to have a higher preference for the integrating, the dominating, and the compromising styles.

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