THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL INTELLIGENCE ON CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STYLES AMONG HR MANAGERS

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ABSTRACT

The study aimed to measure the influence of social intelligence on conflict management styles among HR managers who were working in software companies in Bangalore. For the study, the data was collected from 30 participants. The data was collected on social intelligence by using the Social Intelligence Scale (Dr. N.K. Chadha and Usha Ganesan 1971) and on conflict management styles using The Opinion Survey of Conflict Management (Uday and Prateek). MANOVA was used to analyse the obtained data. The findings show that social intelligence has a significant influence on attribution which is one of the styles of conflict management. There is no significant difference between social intelligence and other styles of conflict management. Results of the present study have application in the fields of conflict management and organizational behavior.

KEYWORDS: Social intelligence, Conflict Management, Resignation, Withdrawal, Diffusion, Appeasement, Confrontation, Compromise, Arbitration, Negotiation.

INTRODUCTION

Social intelligence according to Edward Thorndike, is "the ability to understand and manage men and women, boys and girls, to act wisely in human relations".

Social Intelligence is equivalent to interpersonal intelligence, one of the types of intelligences identified in Howard Gardner's Theory of multiple intelligences, and closely related to

theory of mind. In short, social intelligence is the ability to get along well with others and to get them to cooperate with you.

RELEVANCE OF SOCIAL INTELLIGENCE

In today's hectic world, it is necessary to in still the art of effective social intelligence management. An individual must master the 'social space' and navigate efficiently to assess, express and develop one's social intelligence. People with high social intelligence have magnetic powers that attract others, and they are friendly, supportive, caring, etc., and are successful in the society. People who have low social intelligence lack insight and are preoccupied with so many other things and also fail to understand the perception of others, thereby becoming a misfit in the society. It is a learnable skill that can lessen conflicts, construct relationships, put an end to prejudices and divisions, and prevent people from falling into the miseries of life such as alcohol and drug addiction, suicide, broken families, failed marriages, crimes, murders, terrorism and war. Social intelligence is an important element for our survival and to maintain social balance.

SOCIAL INTELLIGENCE AT THE WORKPLACE

Every organization has its own distinctive work culture – the psychological environment within which people work and interact. In every workplace, there are dozens that are mired in conflict and craziness. Respecting diversity is a key aspect of social intelligence in the workplace relies on people understanding and supporting each other. The root of the problem is the need to communicate, honestly and openly and yet tactfully, in the workplace. Leaders who succeed in building healthy, high-performing cultures capitalize on

the sense of community and advance the aims of the enterprise.

Perceived arrogance, lack of concern for human suffering, coldness, condescension, and an air of infallibility can set the conditions for conflict. Conflict tends to create more conflict. The upward progression of a relationship must begin with some adequate degree of trust – or empathy and engineer a state of affairs that invites others to communicate, share their interests and intentions, and seek common ground. In the continuity stage of cooperation, all parties understand the pragmatic value of helping the others meet their needs and satisfy their interests. Asking questions rather than making declarative statements will often work better in influencing them to change their minds.

The process has less to do with achieving your goals and more to do with opening the lines of communication and keeping the conversation going in order to defuse a potential conflict and perhaps find ways to eventually meet the interests of both parties. Thus social intelligence goes a long way in preventing conflict at the workplace.

CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

Conflict management is the process of planning to avoid conflict where possible and organising to resolve conflict where it does happen, as rapidly and smoothly as possible. Conflict and its resolution happen at many levels: between individuals, organizations, and societies (Bourke, 2001).

CONFLICT MANAGEMENT AT THE WORKPLACE

Overall conflict management should aim to minimize affective conflicts at all levels, attain and maintain a moderate amount of substantive conflict, and use the appropriate conflict management strategy—to effectively

bring about the first two goals, and also to match the status and concerns of the two parties in conflict (Rahim, 2002).

In order for conflict management strategies to be effective, they should satisfy certain criteria. The below criteria are particularly useful for not only conflict management, but also decision making in management.

Organization Learning and Effectiveness- In order to attain this objective, conflict management strategies should be designed to enhance critical and innovative thinking to learn the process of diagnosis and intervention in the right problems.

Needs of Stakeholders- Sometimes multiple parties are involved in a conflict in an organization and the challenge of conflict management would be to involve these parties in a problem solving process that will lead to collective learning and organizational effectiveness. Organizations should institutionalize the positions of employee advocate, customer and supplier advocate, as well as environmental and stockholder advocates.

Ethics - A wise leader must behave ethically, and to do so the leader should be open to new information and be willing to change his or her mind. By the same token subordinates and other stakeholders have an ethical duty to speak out against the decisions of supervisors when consequences of these decisions are likely to be serious. "Without an understanding of ethics, conflict cannot be handled" (Batcheldor, 2000).

Special consideration should be paid to conflict management between two parties from distinct cultures. In addition to the everydaysources of conflict,"misunderstandings, and from this counterproductive,pseudo

conflicts,arise when members of one culture are unable to understand culturally determined differences in communication practices, traditions, and thought processing" (Borisoff & Victor, 1989).

Indeed, this has already been observed in the business research literature. Renner (2007) recounted several episodes where managers from developed countries moved to less developed countries to resolve conflicts within the company and met with little success due to their failure to adapt to the conflict management styles of the local culture.

RELEVANCE OF CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

Conflict is inbuilt in organizations (Katz and Kahn, 1978), and conflict research has made great advancement in discovering the situation of conflict, for what reason it occurred, and how conflict is managed (De Dreu et al., 1999; Thomas, 1992; Tjosvold, 1998; Wall and Callister, 1995) .When conflict is dealt in a positive manner, it persuade inventive solutions, lead to agreement and maintain people through change and tense phase (King, 1999: 11).Those individuals who behave according to the particular situations in which they find themselves are also more likely to resolve conflict in collaboration and compromise way (Warech, Smither, Reilly, Millsap & Reilly, 1998).

METHODOLOGY

Objective:-

To assess the influence of social intelligence on conflict management styles amongst HR managers.

Hypothesis:-

H 1: Social Intelligence has an influence on resignation style of conflict management.

H 2: Social Intelligence has an influence on withdrawal style of conflict management.

H 3: Social Intelligence has an influence on defusion style of conflict management.

H4: Social Intelligence has an influence on appeasement style of conflict management.

H 5: Social Intelligence has an influence on confrontation style of conflict management.

H 6: Social Intelligence has an influence on compromise style of conflict management.

H 7: Social Intelligence has an influence on arbitration style of conflict management.

H 8: Social Intelligence has an influence on negotiation style of conflict management.

Research Design:-

A quantitative research design was selected for this study as the aim was to determine the influence of social intelligence on conflict management amongst HR managers.

Variables:-

Independent Variable:

Social Intelligence.

Dependent variable:

Resignation, Withdrawal, Defusion, Appeasement, Confrontation, Compromise, Arbitration and Negotiation.

Sample:-

Thirty HR managers employed in Software Organizations in Bangalore.

Sampling Method:-

Convenience sampling method was used for this research.

Tool Description:-

The opinion survey of organizational conflicts (Uday and Prateek). The reliability of this scale was found to be .89 and the validity was found to be high.

The social intelligence scale (Dr. N.K Chadha and Usha Ganesan). The reliability of the scale was checked through split half method and test retest reliability. The validity was ensured through empirical validity and cross validation.

Procedure:-

Participants were carefully chosen according to the requirement of the sample group. They were informed of the study before distributing the questionnaires. The questionnaires were given out to the participants personally. The same instructions were given to each participant. On completion and receiving the questionnaire they were thanked for having participated in the research.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Multivariate anova (MANOVA) will be used for analysis of the influence of Social intelligence on each of the conflict management styles. Multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) is a generalized form of univariate analysis of variance (ANOVA). It is used in cases where there are two or more dependent variables.

Table 1: Showing the mean and standard deviation scores for social intelligence and the conflict management styles N=30

Variable	Social Intelligence	
	Mean	Standard Deviation
Resignation	6.96	.76
Withdrawal	5.23	2.45
De fusion	7.80	1.58
Appeasement	11.60	1.40
Confrontation	10.10	2.66
Compromise	12.10	1.47
Arbitration	13.06	2.16
Negotiation	13.86	1.27

The above table shows the mean and standard deviation of social intelligence and the conflict management styles. The mean obtained for the resignation style of conflict management is 6.96 and the standard deviation is .76 (N=30). The mean obtained for the withdrawal style of conflict management is 5.23 and standard deviation is 2.45 (N=30). Similarly the mean obtained for defusion is 7.80 and the standard deviation is 1.58 (N=30). The mean obtained forppeasement style of conflict management is 11.60 and the standard deviation is 1.40 (N=30).a The mean obtained for confrontation style of management is 10.10 and the standard deviation is 2.66 (N=30). The mean obtained for compromise is 12.10 and the standard deviation is 1.47 (N=30). The mean obtained for arbitration style of conflict management is 13.6 and the standard deviation is 2.16 (N=30). Lastly, the mean obtained for negotiation style of conflict management is 13.16 and the standard deviation is 1.27 (N=30)

Table 2: Showing the test of between subject effects.

Source	Dependent Variable	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Social Intelligence	Resignation	1.98	2	.99	1.78	.187
	Withdrawal	1.53	2	.76	.11	.88
	De fusion	3.16	2	1.58	.61	.54
	Appeasement	.36	2	.18	.08	.91
	Confrontation	2.41	2	1.20	.16	.85
	Compromise	1.12	2	.56	.24	.78
	Arbitration	35.35	2	17.67	4.74	.01*
	Negotiation	6.68	2	3.34	2.21	.12
Error			27			
Total			30			

Note: *Sig. <0.05 Significant **Sig <0.01 Significant.

The table 2 shows the test of between subject effects. The score obtained for social intelligence and resignation is $F_{(2, 27)} = 1.78$, $p = .18$, since the $p > 0.05$ this shows that there is no significant influence of social intelligence on resignation which means that the alternate hypothesis H1 is rejected.

The score obtained for social intelligence and withdrawal is $F_{(2, 27)} = .11$, $p = .88$, since the $p > 0.05$ this shows that there is no significant influence of social intelligence on withdrawal which means that the alternate hypothesis H2 is rejected.

The score obtained for social intelligence and defusion is $F_{(2, 27)} = .61$, $p = .54$, since the $p > 0.05$ this shows that there is no significant influence of social intelligence on defusion which means that the alternate hypothesis H3 is rejected.

The score obtained for social intelligence and appeasement is $F_{(2, 27)} = .08$, $p = .91$, since the $p > 0.05$ this shows that there is no significant influence of social intelligence on appeasement which means that the alternate hypothesis H4 is rejected.

The score obtained for social intelligence and confrontation $F_{(2, 27)} = .16$, $p = .85$, since the $p > 0.05$ this shows that there is no significant influence of social intelligence on confrontation which means that the alternate hypothesis H5 is rejected.

The score obtained for social intelligence and compromise is $F_{(2, 27)} = .24$, $p = .78$, since the $p > 0.05$ this shows that there is no significant influence of social intelligence on compromise which means that the alternate hypothesis H6 is rejected.

The score obtained for social intelligence and arbitration is $F_{(2, 27)} = 4.47$, $p = .01*$, since the $p < 0.05$ this shows that there is significant influence of social intelligence on arbitration which means that the alternate hypothesis H7 is accepted. These results are confirmed in a study done by Beheshtifar and Roasaei titled "Role of Social intelligence in Organizational Leadership"

This study found that aspects of social intelligence have been found to be associated with enhanced social problem-solving abilities, experienced leadership, and positive interpersonal experience. Social intelligence can serve as a foundation for, and help facilitate in the leadership effectiveness and success. It is suggested to measure a manager's social intelligence and help him or her develop a plan for improving it.

The score obtained for social intelligence and negotiation is $F_{(2, 27)} = 2.21$, $p = .12$, since the $p > 0.05$ this shows that there is no significant influence of social intelligence on negotiation which means that the alternate hypothesis H8 is rejected.

CONCLUSIONS

The findings show that social intelligence has a significant influence on arbitration and other conflict management styles like resignation, withdrawal, defusion, appeasement, confrontation, compromise, arbitration and negotiation are not significantly influenced by social intelligence.

The finding can be used in the organisation setting. It can be used while giving training for conflict management.

LIMITATIONS

✐ Experience of the HR Managers was not considered in the sample.

✐ The sample was collected only from Bangalore.

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