An Analysis of the Relationship of Approaches to Resolve the Interpersonal Conflict & Morale of the Academicians in the Pakistani Universities

Kamran Mehmood (author for correspondence)
MPhil Student in Management Studies, Department Public Administration, Gomal University,
Dera Ismail Khan, Khyber Pakhtunkwa, Pakistan. E-mail: kami85.aries@gmail.com

Dr. Ghulam Muhammad Kundi
Assistant Professor, Department Public Administration, Gomal University,
Dera Ismail Khan, Khyber Pakhtunkwa, Pakistan. E-mail: kundi@gu.edu.pk

Dr. Shadiullah Khan
Professor, Department Public Administration, Gomal University
Dera Ismail Khan, Khyber Pakhtunkwa, Pakistan. E-mail: drshadiullahkhan@yahoo.com

Robina Akhtar
MPhil Student in Education at IER, Gomal University Dera Ismail Khan
Khyber Pakhtunkwa, Pakistan. E-mail: alishba.daali@gmail.com

Abstract
Conflict management is a widespread and heavily investigated topic of research both in the developed as well as in developing countries. Different approaches have been developed for example, interpersonal conflict, compromising, integrative, obliging, and dominating, avoiding that may influence the morale of the employees in all kinds of organization no matter public or private, business or service etc. In this study we have analyzed these approaches that to which one is helpful in resolving the conflict and how it impact the morale of the employees in the context of the western countries, however, little attention is paid to this issue in the developing countries like Pakistan in general and the higher education systems in particular. The aim of this study was to analyze that which of the interpersonal conflict resolution approach has significant relationship with morale of the academicians of the public sector universities in Pakistan. The study concludes that there is positive and significant relationship between interpersonal conflict resolution approaches and level of education with morale of the teachers working in universities of Pakistan. However, the dominating approach has not significant relationship with morale of the academicians. However, the results of the study in Pakistan were consistent with previous studies.
Key Words: Interpersonal Conflict, Compromising, Integrative, Obliging, Dominating, Avoiding, Morale, Higher Education Institutions, Pakistan.

1. Introduction

All sector of economy including education sector of the country is responsible to fulfill the human resource needs of the country. Better understanding these approaches help the organizational authorities to resolve interpersonal conflicts and related issues among the different employees in general and specifically among the faculty members in the higher education institutions inorder to improve the morale of the teachers, which further leads to higher level of motivation, satisfaction and better human resources for the other sectors of the country too. Cebeci (2006) necessitates the dire need for examining the relationship between different types of conflict resolution approaches and factors influenced by these approaches. This provided a baseline to the researchers, therefore, the selection of the topic on relationship between different approaches to resolve the interpersonal conflicts and morale of the employees is consistent with Cebeci (2006). Likewise, Ayoko & Konrad (2012) studied the relationship between conflict and morale of the employees, however he did not included the relationship between different approaches to resolve the conflict and morale of the employees, whereas, this study is an attempt to fill, this gap.

Research studies have been conducted with the varying objectives; however, major objective of this study was to understand the interpersonal conflict resolution approaches which might have significant relationship with and impacts on morale of the faculty members of universities working in education sector of Pakistan. Moreover, this study will be helpful to understand the best approach to resolve the interpersonal conflicts among the faculty

members of the universities in Pakistan. On this basis of the findings of the analyses of the data, the approaches which are positively related with morale of the employees will help to improve the productivity of the education sector. In the same way, the approaches which are negatively related to morale of the employees can be avoided to avoid any damages to the morale of the employees working in the higher education sector of Pakistan.

2.1. Problem Statement

As it is well understood that no person is similar and alike to other in physical appearance as well as mentally, therefore, in the same manner their attitude and behavior are also different that help the management to make a clear distinction between different employees working under their control. Likewise, the differences in the personality, attitude, beliefs and priorities may emerge in the forms of interpersonal conflicts among individuals, which results into poor performance of employees and the organization too. The outcome of this conflict appeared in the form of human and financial loss to the organizations. This scenario motivated the researchers to study the different approaches to resolve the interpersonal conflicts, that which of the interpersonal conflict resolution approach is more suitable in resolving the interpersonal conflict among the employees in the education sector of Pakistan, and how their morale could be improved?

2. Literature Review

Several studies have investigated the relationship of the interpersonal conflict resolution approached with the morale of the employees in western societies, including (Amason, 1996; Barki & Hartwick, 1994; Brown & Day, 1981; Etgar, 1979; Habib, 1987; Jehn, 1995 and Robey et al., 1989), Similarly, Blake & Mouton (1964); Kilmann & Thomas (1977); Putnam & Wilson (1982); and Rahim (1983) tried to understand the strategies to resolve the interpersonal conflicts among the employees as well as between the management and employees too. In this study, we have reviewed the related literature with reference to higher education institutions in Pakistan.

2.1 Conflict

Organizations change their structures and processes and these changes leads to new roles, changes or reallocation of duties, and introducing new methods to accomplish their work (Ito & Brotheridge, 2012). The factor like changes in operations, structures, methods to accomplish a job, reallocation of duties, non-routine decision-making, and expectations to perform leads to ambiguity, conflict, and complexity (Ibid, 2012). Wall & Callister (1995) studied that these changes in organizations not only cause disagreements about role boundaries, resource sharing, and setting priorities but leads to preconditions of conflict. They observed that rationality for bringing changes in organizational settings and procedures can never eliminate the interpersonal conflicts. However, contrary to some factors causing conflict to raise some of the factors leads to improving the overall situation. By example, supervisor's role is very important to reduce interpersonal conflict through different tactics such as: defining decisional premises i.e. specifying boundaries, support i.e. allocating resources, and acting like intermediary i.e. clarifying disputants' positions. These roles of supervisor i.e. defining decisional premises, supporting, and intermediary not only help to reduce conflicts but also help to impede it to rise and it helps in reducing causes of interpersonal conflict.

Bolman & Deal (1991) narrated that organizations have limited resources and while moving upward in the organizations the competition for the scarce resources increased which results into conflict among individuals as promotion of an employee depends upon the availability of resources. Competitive environment of the organization for rewards and promotion leads to fight for the limited resources of the organization and this leads to; usage of tactics of coercion, deception, or threat; attempts made for creating power distance among individuals; rise of suspicious or hostile attitude (Coleman & Fisher-Yoshida, 2004). Pondy (1967) studied interpersonal conflict as mediating variable among resource demand and work demand. This struggle for resource demand causes interpersonal conflicts among individuals at various levels.

Bondesio (1992) learnt and proposed three sources of conflicts i.e. factors associated with personal behavior, structure, and communication. Another study conducted by Aydin (2000) observed that, in organizations, sources of conflicts are bureaucratic quality, communication system, inspection style, individualized behaviors, limited resources, new expertise, size of the organization, personnel difference, shared decision making, and task completion. Likewise, Grant et al. (2010) narrated that social networks or social relationship among individuals is a source of increasing or decreasing interpersonal conflicts. They found four themes which cause interpersonal conflict, including the degree of participation in publicizing planning, the advent of role ambiguity, cultural stereotyping, and conflicts of interest. In entrepreneurship employees and business owners are linked with each other through strong and active network and this relationship is embedded with personal and organizational relationship. This social network among employees and entrepreneurs helps in conflict management and improve

performance of the employees (Shaw, 2006). So, this implies that a well-managed conflict is the source of energy and productivity for an organization (Gordon, 2003). Rahim (2002) studied that conflict arises when a person or party needs to involve in such types of activities, which are contradicting with their needs or interest. Tjosvold (1991) studied that conflict saturates life of an organization and poorly managed conflict damage an organization and if a situation of loss-loss occur when conflict accelerates and it results into involving individuals into vicious circles of conflict. He further points that if either parties or individuals try to resolve the conflict, it will save them from the condition of loss-loss and leads to problem solving and reducing tension.

2.1.1   Stages of Conflict

Pondy (1967) in his study found that leaders try to know the dynamics of conflicts, which help them to understand how these conflicts develop and then dealing with these conflicts. There are five stages of conflict development viz. latent conflict, perceived conflict, felt conflict, manifest conflict, and conflict aftermath. He further stated that in organizations, conflict arises as an outcome, or upshot of former conflicts, especially where one party feels unsatisfactory over resolutions. However, other conflicts lead to other four dynamics i.e. latent, perceived, felt, and manifest conflict, of conflict development process. When perceived conflict is personalized it is known as felt conflict and it is apparent between the parties/individuals. Manifest type of conflict mainly observed by aggressive behavior between parties. In this case aggressive behavior results due to frustration of the goals of opponents.

2.1.2 Types of Conflict

An understanding the type of conflict is equally important as to understand the goals of a team or organization (Esquivel & Kleiner, 1997) concludes as the progress of a team is based on the type of conflict among the individuals of that team because the type of conflict positively or negatively impacts the decision making ability of the people).

The difference among individuals helps in deciding the type of conflict i.e. C-type or A-type. In case of C-type of conflict, individuals focus on functional, main idea related differences in opinion, which leads to improving the effectiveness of a team (Amason et al., 1995). They observed that such type of conflict leads to understanding and discussing the point of views of each other and reaching a common point of understanding. This also include giving due respect to the all members of the team. Contrary to C-type of conflict, A-type of conflict has negative relationship with the effectiveness of the team. This type of conflict leads to imposing or persuading others to work for the personal gains of the individual. Under such type of conflict, creativity and effective decision making reduces, which leads to rise in hostility, anger, and reducing the trust. In case of Type-A conflict, the opinion of individuals is never welcomed, which leads to loss of commitment and performance of the team (Amason et al., 1995). So it is difficult to understand and classify different types of conflicts and a conflict may appear as a one type and ends in the form of any other type (Bondesio, 1992). He proposed different types of conflicts as intrapersonal, interpersonal, individual vs. organization, individual vs. group, group vs. group, organization vs. organization, strategic, and structural.

Yet, DeDreu & Weingart (2003) conducted a meta-analysis and learnt that task related conflict is less concerned to one's own identity and pride and emotionally less intense than interpersonal conflict. While according to Thomas (1992), conflict as a term is used in two broader ways. At first, it means incompatibility among the responses of the individuals. For instance, in case of behavioral conflicts, individuals are in the need of deciding whether to proceed with a particular course of action or not. By the same way, in case of role conflict, one needs to select the one out of several sets of role demands. While at second, conflict arises among different groups, teams, organizations, or different types of social units. Scholars like Putnam & Poole (1987) and Thomas (1992) highlighted three properties of conflict and named them as inter-dependence, difference, and meddling. However, interdependence exists when achievement of one party's goals are linked with the performance of other/others. Interdependence provide sufficient base for understanding the rationality of the existence of interpersonal conflicts. In many cases one can observe that individuals or groups are interdependent but no conflict arises among them and it leads to the conclusion that inter-dependence is just a necessary but not a sufficient form for arising of interpersonal conflicts. Similarly, on other hand, disagreement emerges as a result of divergence of needs, opinions, objectives, values, interests, and goals. Just like inter-dependence, disagreement is the necessary but not the sufficient condition for causing conflicts. Interference in the matters of other individuals, teams, or organizations causes conflict. Where, interference means involving or opposing the interests, goals, or objectives of the other party.

Wall & Callister (1995) asserts that behavior of people is the core for causing interpersonal conflicts, which is the result of negative emotions of individuals and these negative emotions include frustration, anger, anxiety,

and jealousy (Amason, 1996; Jehn, 1995; Pinkley, 1990; Pondy, 1967; Thomas, 1992). These studies also observed that these types of negative emotions are the results of major disagreements and interference of individuals in the activities related to attainment of important assignments. However, Deutcsch (1990) and Thomas (1992) characterized the term conflict into different kinds, or groups based on the usage and ways, the term is being used. Thomas (1992) observed two broader ways to use the term conflict. Firstly, he referred it to behavioral conflict, which is caused by incompatibility between response tendencies of individuals. According to him, such situations lead to a point where individuals have to make decision whether to pursue with same course of action or to adopt a new strategy. Whereas, in case of role conflict, one must select one of the different conflicting role demands. Secondly, conflict as term is understood to occur between different individuals, groups, officialdoms, or other societal entities. Barki & Hartwick (2001) support the above referred study and further added that interpersonal conflict comes under the second use of the term conflict.

2.1.3   Conflicts and the Higher Education Sector

According to Loewen in: Mhehe (1997), about 10 percent of the human related activities in an education related organizations are involved in the conflict, further, he claimed that conflict is a source of shaping and molding the human behavior in organizations. Corwin (1969) as cited by Mhehe (1997) conducted a study based on the data collected from 28 public sector educational institutions and proposed five variables, which lead to conflict are: (a) Structural differences, which are based on degree of organizational differences, specialization level of staff, and levels of authority; (b) participative decision making; (c) regularization of procedures, especially where conflict is under control of organization; (d) heterogeneity; and (e) structural arrangement for interpersonal relationship among employees. Owens (1995) in his research work states that conflicts can cause damages to organizations in different ways and these must be handled with immense care, especially in education related organizations. He further observed that educational institutions leads to improving cooperation and human endeavor for achieving those goals, which are hard to achieve with the efforts of an individual.

Moreover, Kathman & Kathman (1990) states that there is need to resolve interpersonal conflicts to increase the performance of the employees. Rahim (2002) used the terms conflict resolution and conflict management strategies, interchangeably, likewise, Bacal (1998) points that people express their concerns when they feel uncomforting to the situation/conflict. Once concerned parties have expressed their concerns, the next stage is to resolve the conflict by keeping in view the concerns of the other party to increase the productivity and bringing a positive change at the workplace. According to Pettas & Gilliland (1992), a poor or badly managed conflict can cause many problems and further leads to many conflicts and point of no return. Moreover, Thomas (1976) proposed five different styles of managers to resolve the conflicts. These styles are competing, avoiding, sharing, accommodating, and collaborating. He defined these styles and states that competing means achieving one's own goals while ignoring the goals of others i.e. win-loss. Whereas, avoiding refers to indifference to the wants and needs of both the parties, similarly, sharing refers to an approach in which state of compromising arises.

By the same way, accommodative style means giving priority to the points or needs of others over one's own. Last but not least is the collaborative approach which is based on mutual understanding and reaching a point of common interest and win-win type of situation comes as a result of such type of strategy. Thomas (1977) proposes that the strategy to resolve conflict depends upon the situation and the rationality for existence of different types of conflict resolution approaches is to create the win-win situation. He further studied that applying the same strategy to all situations with varying nature, kind, and level of conflict is not the appropriate way to manage the conflict.

2.1.4 Integrating Strategy

Barki & Hartwick (2001) referred it to a problem solving approach, where conflict is not considered as fixed pie or zero sum situations. This approach of conflict resolution is based on win-win situation and is similar to the strategies i.e. collaborating and integrating given by Rahim (2002). They further advocates that problem solving, integrating, cooperating, and collaborating are the terms, which can be used interchangeably.

2.1.5 Compromising Strategy

This approach is helpful for resolving the complex/critical and both parties have same level of interests, where usually concerned parties sacrifice some of their interests to reach a common solution/decision. While on other hand, the compromising strategy of Barki & Hartwick (2001) is similar that of the term used by Rahim (2002).

2.1.6 Obliging Strategy

The obliging approach/strategy means, high level of consideration for others and lower level of consideration for the self-interests, it may help in reducing the differences among individuals and improves harmony by highlighting commonalities. Individuals obliging other's concern, usually willing to satisfy the concern of other are willing to sacrifice personal gains (Rahim et al., 2002). On the basis of the studies conducted by different scholars (Rahim, 2002; Rahim et al. 2002; and Huczynski & Buchanan, 1997) it is safely concluded that there will be positive and significant relationship between obliging type of inter personal conflict resolution approach and morale of the teachers in the Pakistani universities.

2.1.7 Avoiding Strategy

Rahim (2002) views are similar to that of Barki & Hartwick (2001), who states that avoiding each other's interests occur when conflicting parties refuse to act or join any conflict resolution related meeting/activity. Thus withdrawal of one party leads to no solution for handling, eliminating, or controlling the conflict, however, similar words for avoiding strategies are apathy, evading, escaping, and withdrawing.

2.1.8 Dominating Strategy

Likewise, asserting type of interpersonal conflict resolution approach discussed by Barki & Hartwick (2001) is also similar to the dominating strategy of Rahim (2002), who are of the view that asserting occurs when an individual exert his efforts to win or overcome. The asserting approach considers conflict as fixed pie or zero sums and the gain of one party is possible on the loss of another, especially when conflict is based on goal achievement. This can be understood when one party's performance or correctness is based on the poor performance and inaccuracy of the other, this is evident of their similarity as both advocates that success of one party is based on the failure of second party.

2.2 The Morale of the Employees

The presence of conflict to increase productivity and motivation leads to healthy organizational environment and to avoid such type of conflict is not a good strategy for any of the organizations (Edwards & Walton, 2000) concludes.

Whereas, Albritton & Shaughnessy (1990) considered conflict as an indicator of healthy competition, which may or may not be at different levels i.e. interpersonal or intergroup. They found that conflict management skills are the most vital skills which a leader must possess. Kathman & Kathman (1990) are of the opinion that conflict is dangerous to the organization and it can reduce the performance of the organization.

Some of the studies for example, Washington & Watson (1976) and Evans (1998) studied it and points that there is no agreement on its single definition, however, Webster's New World Dictionary define morale "as a concept which includes some characteristics such as, courage, confidence, discipline, enthusiasm, willingness to endure hardship etc.", it also includes willingness to withstand hardship. Similarly, Evans (1998) pretends that morale is an individual phenomenon and related to individual. Keeler & Andrews (1963) observed that the extent to which job satisfaction and morale of teachers is correlated with organizational dimensions depends upon the personal attitude of the teachers, thus low morale or dissatisfaction of one may not affect the level of satisfaction or morale of other person. Another study conducted by Strickland (1962) found that there are ten factors which badly or negatively affect the morale of the teacher. These factors are:

a. No break during the working hours and clerical duties
b. Poor or no support of administration staff, and lack of facilities
c. Lower level of coordination among faculty and staff
d. Excessive teaching related load, and lower pay level
e. Lesser interest and cooperation from parent's side
f. Lack of discipline at student's end, and inadequate resources for the teachers.

Brotheridge (2012) observed that there is negative and significant relationship between interpersonal conflict and motivation. They further view that interpersonal conflict is negatively and significantly related with job satisfaction. Moreover, they observed that interpersonal and work family conflicts reduce the effects of role ambiguity on strain. Furthermore, they concluded that interpersonal conflict and work-family conflict mediate the effect of supervisor's support, task complexity, and role conflict on strain.

2.3 Description of Research Variables

After going through existing studies, it is now well understood that interpersonal conflict negatively and badly affect the morale of the teachers. This is the reason that in Germany, one of the European countries, conflict in interests among employees of government sector is considered a crime (Nikolov & Bulgaria, 2013). According to them, conflict in interest leads to confusion, corruption, power abuses, and using public funds for self-interest and it results in damaging the society. Below table shows the description of major research variables of this study:

Table: Description of Research Variables

| Variable	Definition	Reference
Conflict	A process in which a purposely made effort of A offset the efforts made by B and it results in damaging the interests of the B.	Robbins (1991)
Avoiding Approach	An conflict resolution approach in which an individual's intention is to deny from his/her needs.	Rahim (2002)
Dominating Approach	A conflict resolution approach associated with forcing/influencing other party to reach on a common opinion.	Rahim (2002)
Compromising Approach	Compromising approach includes cooperation between two parties and it entails disintegration of issues.	Rahim (2002)
Integrating Approach	Integrating approach means collaboration between parties to reach a common solution to the problem after sharing information with each other.	Rahim (2002)
Obliging Approach	This approach leads to surrendering one's point or right in favor of other party.	Rahim (2002)
Morale of the Employees	Morale is the feelings of a worker about his/her job in connection to its significance for the organization or working unit.	Washington & Watson (1976)

3. Methodology

Survey of the literature was done and relevant sources of existing research exhausted. ATLAS.ti was used for qualitative data analysis. Major concepts, variables entered to ATLAS.ti, coding, extraction of quotes and memos creation was done through ATLAS.ti for data analysis. Experts have suggested examining, categorizing, tabulating and recombining as methods of data analysis, however, the researchers have used hermeneutics (James, 1992), discourse (Max, 1990) and heuristic (Moustakas, 1990) for analyses. Survey was undertaken for collection of primary data from the sample respondents.

3.1 Theoretical Framework of the Study

Abraham Maslow (1943) proposed five types of needs for example, physiological, safety, social, self-esteem, and self-actualization, motivate an individual. Maslow (1970) further proposed building blocks for the teacher morale. The indicators of each needs proposed by Maslow (1943, & 1970) overlaps with the morale of the employees. This tends to understand how motivational theory of Maslow (1943) supports in studying the morale of the employees. Whereas, a study conducted by Evans (1998) provides sufficient evidences to study the relationship between different approaches to resolve interpersonal conflicts and morale of the teachers. Based on the previous studies and extracted research variables, below is the schematic diagram of the theoretical framework of this study.

Figure-1: Schematic Diagram of the Theoretical Framework
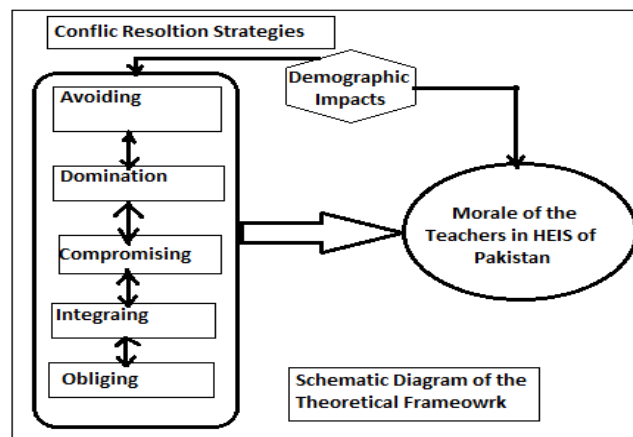
4. Discussion & Conclusions

It is observed by Higgins (1991) that different techniques and approaches are used for resolution and management of the interpersonal conflicts in the organizations. This study aimed at studying the relationship between different conflict resolution approaches and morale of the teachers and concluded that there is significant relationship between these five approaches i.e. obliging, integrating, compromising, avoiding, and dominating, and morale of the teachers. Amason et al. (1995) have found that different types of techniques are used for management of different types of conflicts; however this study focused on finding the relationship between different types of conflict resolution approaches and their relationship with morale of the teachers. It is found that interpersonal conflict among faculty members of the universities can be resolved by using any of the five approaches of interpersonal conflict resolution approaches depending on the favorable or unfavorable situations. This study found significant relationship among five approaches of interpersonal conflict resolution and morale of the teachers, which is in line with the findings of the Rahim (2002). As Rahim (2002) narrated that a single technique or strategy is not sufficient to deal with conflicts and there is need to use a combination of different strategies to resolve conflicts.

The relationship of integrative, compromising, obliging, dominating, and avoiding type of conflict resolution approach with morale of the teachers was found significant, which is consistent with the findings and recommendations of the studies conducted by different scholars like, Huczynski & Buchanan (1997); Rahim (2002); Rahim et al. (2002); Thomas (1997); Veaner (1990) and Albritton & Shaughnessy (1990). However, except gender, qualification has insignificant impacts on the morale of teachers in the HEIs of Pakistan. Therefore, findings of this study suggest that in future the researchers need to concentrate deep into physical and psychological influences on the attitude and behavior of the academicians and their impact on their academic performance in HEIs.

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