



Employee - Supervisor Conflict Management in Organization

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Abstract: Globalisation has caused more diversity in the workplace and in addition to the benefits it has led to increased conflicts. The perception of conflict is not the same between individuals because they bring different cultures and mentalities. As a result, its management is demanding and requires a detailed analysis of the situation to determine the most effective method to use. The study aims to analyse the styles employees use in handling conflicts with their supervisor. The study uses as research instrument a questionnaire created relating on other studies to collect the data needed for the research analysis. As all the sample of respondents is composed by Albanian citizens the language of the questionnaire is Albanian language. The study found out that Albanian employees use the collaborating style in handling conflict, and also compromising style which favours both parties and finding a common solution.

Keywords: conflict management styles, handling conflict, collaborating style, compromising style



1 Introduction

Globalization, demographic change, emigration, low fertility rate, few opportunities for skilled work, high level of women participation at labor force, are factors that have impacted the increase of the heterogeneity in the workforce in recent years. Diversity has influenced organizations to implement rules and policies in order to effectively manage problems or conflicts that may arise as a result of cultural changes that affect each individual.

The organizations stimulates conflict, competition and comparison between departments and individuals. Conflict is a reality in the social context founded at personal, group and organizational level. Since the consequences of the conflict are categorized as functional and dysfunctional, exists a necessity to investigate several particular and different techniques and tools to handle the conflict. Managing the conflict effectively and adequately is a must in order to prevent conflict, its negative causes and to influence the concentration of employees in their work environment, without being influenced by other internal or external causes.

The study aims to analyze the employee-supervisor conflict management in Albanian organizations. The questions raised on this research study are:

1. What style of conflict management is used in resolving employee-supervisor conflict in Albanian organizations?
2. Do demographic factors impact the choice of managing the conflict?

The formulated hypothesises of the research are presented as follows:

1. Albanian organizations use all five styles of conflict management.
2. Demographic factors impact the choice of conflict management styles.

2 Literature Review

A considerable amount of research has paid attention to conflict in organizations and its impact on work outcomes, reflecting a growing concern about the harmful effects of conflict on group and individual performance. It should be noted that many of the problems cited in the work environment are related to interpersonal conflicts and conflict styles. (Friedman et al., 2000)

Rahim (2001) argues that relationships between entities, such as individuals, groups or organizations, can have conflicts or disagreements when: two or more of them want the same resource which is available but lacks quantities to satisfy all parties; when they have in part preferences and attitudes referring to joint actions; or when they display contrasting attitudes, behaviors, mindset, values as well as abilities.

Social conflict studies have been important by scholars of various disciplines. The consequences of the conflict are functional and dysfunctional. The outcomes of the



functional conflict are distinguished in terms of improved decisionmaking in organization, innovation, growth and creativity, synergy in solving problems, improved performance inside the group, seeking new approaches from individuals and groups; clarification of the positions of individuals and groups. Dysfunctional outcomes include conflict as a cause of stress, job abandonment, and dissatisfaction; reducing communication between groups and individuals; developing a climate of mistrust and suspicion in the work environment; damages the relationships between colleagues; reducing work outcomes; expanded resistance to change; organizational commitment and devotion can be affected.

2.1 Type of conflict in the organization

Relying on the theory of Pygmalion, employee performance is determined by their attitude and expectations, as well as how they are largely treated in the workplace. A conflict situation between the supervisor and employees results on feeling created in the employee perceptions meaning that their supervisors have low expectations for them. Based on those perception the employees will try to avoid the conflict.

The confrontation with different types of employees, peers and other team members require the implementation of several and different styles of coping with the conflict. If the organization has an approach that favors the use of only one style of conflict management concerning to all the types of conflicts than this strategy would generate the expected results. The kind of approach used by the supervisor to cope with the conflict within the organizational context affects the relationship between them and their employees but also the trust and loyalty of employees. Despite this, exist also other factors that cause conflict. By considering the differences within the types of conflict, the managers can use the appropriate style for resolving the conflict. If the conflict remains unresolved, it could have serious consequences.

We can evaluate the essence of the conflict by focusing on the sources that generate the conflict, which are relationships, tasks and processes (Robbins - Judge, 2021). Relationship conflicts are always dysfunctional and are the most psychologically exhausting (Robbins - Judge, 2021). The conflict related with the work tasks slightly reduces the extent to which people collaborate, and moderately increases the degree to which they compete with one another. This has a strong negative effect on their trust and job attitudes. From low to moderate levels this type of conflict is always functional and supports employees to seek clarification or to generate new ideas in terms of accomplishing their goals (Robbins - Judge, 2021). The conflict that occurs in the frame of disagreements for the work process in low levels results always functional. When this kind of conflict takes a very personalized shape can be easily transformed into a relationship conflict (Robbins - Judge, 2021).



2.2 Division of the conflict's category

Conflict within the organizational context can be divided as conflict inside the organization and conflict between different organizations. The conflict inside the organization can be divided further at individual level, group level etc. (Rahim, 2001). Interpersonal conflict occurs when an organizational member is required to perform certain tasks and roles that are inconsistent with his or her expertise, interests, goals, and values. Interpersonal conflict refers to conflict between two or more organizational members of the same levels or different hierarchical units. Studies on superior-subordinate conflict relate to this type of conflict (Rahim 2001, p.23). Conflict within the group refers to the conflict between members of a group or between two or more subgroups within a group over its goals, tasks, procedures, etc (Rahim, 2001, p. 24.) Intergroup conflict refers to conflict between two or more entities or groups within an organization. Conflicts between line and staff, production and marketing, and headquarters and field personnel are examples of this type of conflict (Rahim, 2001, p. 24).

2.3 Consequences of interpersonal conflict

Previous studies generally show that one style of problem solving or integration by members of an organization leads to greater satisfaction and effectiveness of the members of the organization. Misquita (1998) reported that when subordinates perceived that their supervisors were treating the conflict in an integrative style, their organizational engagement increased. If subordinates perceived that their supervisors were using evasive and dominant styles, their organizational engagement diminished. Weider - Hatfield (1995) explored the relationships between five conflict management styles and their perceptions of organizational effectiveness, using a human resource model as a guide. The results showed that the use of integrative style subordinates was positively correlated with six individual and organizational outcomes (job satisfaction, global equity, system outcomes, work outcomes, performance outcomes, and interpersonal outcomes). Also, compromise style was positively associated with interpersonal outcomes, dominant style was negatively associated with job satisfaction, and dominant and avoidant styles were negatively associated with interpersonal outcomes.

2.4 Management of conflict in organizations

According to Rahimi (2002, p. 206) conflict and its constructive management are important for the optimal functioning of organizations however, most conflict management recommendations still focus on reducing, resolving or minimizing conflict, due to the negative impact that may have on organizations and individuals. Conflict management needs to focus more on continuous transformation. This decision can bring worries and distractions from work, affecting the decision-



making process, relationships and individual effectiveness, as well as productivity and creativity (Cowan, 1995 p.24).

In addition, there is evidence that conflict can negatively affect organizational processes, productivity, and increased spending (Burton, 1990). Despite these claims, if managed constructively, conflict can contribute positively to job satisfaction, well-being (De Dreu et al, 2004 p.115) and even stress reduction (Friedman et al., 2000). Conflict management styles are generally studied as individual characteristics or trends. An individual conflict style contains a general behavioral orientation or expectation, around the individual approach to conflict. Individuals usually choose a certain style, a model of principles to guide them through different episodes of conflict.

Based on the fact that the nature of managerial conflict is a phenomenon that occurs at individual level according to perception processes and individual's experience, the sort of analysis implemented to understand it needs to be in terms of observing individual's manifestation of behaviour.

There are several studies on the conflict management area that rely on the Dual Anxiety Model, a model developed by Blake and Mouton (1964). A 28- item questionnaire was created and projected to estimate and evaluate the styles of relational conflict between subordinate-supervisor, and colleagues (Rahim 1983 as cited by Weider – Hatfield, 1995).

Authors have identified five kinds of intentions to handle the conflict: competing style, collaborating style, avoiding style, accommodating style and compromising style (Robbins - Judge, 2021).

3 Methodology

This study is based on primary and secondary sources for collecting the data. A designed questionnaire has been implemented to collect the primary data, meanwhile other data have been collected by studies conducted from several studies realized by different authors.

The drafting and construction of the questionnaire was based on works listed in the literature review. The questionnaire was created by using the appropriate survey software (SurveyMonkey) enabling it completing online. Using the electronic questionnaire can be very useful as it is fast, low-cost, does not require help, and can be easily distributed to a large number of people (Williamson, 2002). The questionnaire is formulated in Albanian language. All surveyed people are Albanian citizens and live in Albania.



The questionnaire aims to analyze which conflict management styles are most used by Albanian employees to handle the conflict with their supervisor. The questionnaire is divided into two sections.

The first section includes demographic data of respondents such as: gender, age, level of education and years of experience in organization. In this section are used closed-ended questions. The second sections contains 28 items of the Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory, ROCI-II (1983a, 1983b; Rahim & Magner, 1994) with a 5-point Likert scale (from 1 - strongly disagree to 2- strongly agree) that reflect conflict management styles. The five conflict management styles reflect different combinations of 'concern for self' and 'concern for others'.

The instrument built by Rahim highlights five styles of employee –supervisor conflict management respectively, collaborating style, accommodating style, competing style, avoiding style and compromising style. The competing style is uncooperative and individuals who use this method try to solve their own problems and satisfy personal expectations at the expense of the other party. The collaborating style is based entirely on collaboration between individuals. who try to find a favorable solution that fully solves the concerns of both parties. The compromising style tries to find an acceptable solution that only partially meets the needs and resolves the concerns of both parties. The avoiding style is unassertive and uncooperative. Individuals who use this style avoid conflict without trying to resolve it. The accommodating style is unassertive and cooperative. Individuals who use this style try to satisfy expectations and solve the other person's problems at their own expense.

The sample of participants consisted of 110 individuals of different professions, employed in various organizations in Albania. For the selection of the sample, the combination of the convention technique with the snowball technique (used in the non-probabilistic samples) was used.

Processing and analysis of data collected through questionnaires was performed through SPSS Statistic 24. software. The analysis for deriving the results was performed through descriptive analysis, correlation analysis and simple regression. Prior to performing the main data analysis, the research instrument was tested for reliability using the Cronbach Alfa coefficient. The Cronbach Alpha, also known as the Alpha Coefficient, aims to prove whether multi-question questionnaires rated through the Likert scale are reliable (Cronbach, 1951). For the instrument to be considered reliable, the value of Cronbach alpha must exceed a minimum of 0.6. (Hair et al., 2006).

Pearson's correlation coefficient and regression analysis were also used to determine the relationship between demographic factors and the choice of conflict management styles. Various authors suggest different interpretations of the correlation coefficient, however, this study followed the guidelines of Davis, (1971), where: value intervals of 0.70 and more consist of a very strong relationship;



intervals from 0.50 to 0.69 consist of a significant relationship; intervals from 0.30 to 0.49 consist of a moderate relationship; intervals from 0.10 to 0.29 consist of a weak relationship; and <0.09 the relationship is considered negligible. The simple linear regression model created to explain the association between the explanatory variable and the dependent variable has the general form as following:

$$Y = b_0 + a_1X_1$$

Each element in this equation explains how the dependent variable depends on the weight (role) that the independent variables has in its modeling in terms of the assumed link model.

The table below explain the type of variable, their construction and the number of items use to measure each variable.

Table 1. Explanation of the variables

Variable type	Variable names	Variable constructs	No. of items
Dependent variable	The styles of conflict management	Collaborating Accommodating Competing Avoiding Compromising	7 statements 6 statements 5 statements 6 statements 4 statements Rahim (1983, 1986)
Independent variables	Demographic factors	Gender Age Level of education Years of experience	2 options 4 options 4 options 5 options

Source: SPSS output

4 Results

4.1 Characteristics of respondents

Table number 2 shows the demographic data of individuals who completed the questionnaire by education level, gender, age groups, and years of background in organization.



Table 2. Demographic data

Characteristics		Percent (%)
Gender	Male	17,6
	Female	82,4
Age	18-34	75,9
	35-44	14,8
	45-54	4,6
	55-64	4,6
Level of education	High school	20,4
	Student	13,9
	High education	27,8
	Master/PhD	38,0
Years of experience in organization	Less than one year	37,5
	One to three years	30,8
	Four to six years	10,6
	Seven to nine years	5,8
	More than ten years	15,4

Source: SPSS output

According to the demographic results, the gender dispersal is not balanced, subsequently 17,6% of participants are male meanwhile 82,41% female. Regarding the age groups, the largest one is 18-34 years old (75.9%), the second one is 35- 44 (14,8%). The study sample is represented by the youngest group of participants.

From the study participants 38 % of surveyed people has master degree or doctoral degree, 27,8 % has completed the higher education, followed by respondents that has high school and students respectively with 20,4% and 13,9%. According to the years of backgrounds within organization, the major group is represented by the respondents that have less than 1 year of work experience in organization (37,5%) followed by the group of respondents that has 1 – 3 year of work experience in organization (30,8%).

4.2 Descriptive Analysis

Table 3 shows the results concerning the use of the five conflict management style from the respondents.



Table 3 Descriptive Result: Conflict Management Styles

Statistics		COLL.S.	ACCOM.S.	COMP.S.	AV.S.	COMPR.S.
N	Valid	110	110	110	110	110
	Missing	0	0	0	0	0
Mean		4.15	2.99	3.25	3.25	3.89
Std. Deviation		.551	.668	.783	.652	.646

Souce: The table is generated as SPSS output

As we can see from the table, respondents from different organization prefer to use the Collaborating Style (4.15) and Compromising Style (3.89) to resolve the conflict with their supervisor. Results show the less use of the Accommodating Style (2.99), Competing Style (3.25) and Avoiding style (3.25).

Going in the depth of the results, we will compare mean of the conflict management styles within gender, age group, level of education and year of experience to see if there are any differences. The results show that there is no difference between females and males concerning the choose of the style for handling the conflict with their supervisor. There are some differences between age groups and the choose of the style for handling the conflict with their supervisor. Age group 45-54 prefer to use more the Compromising style compering with other age groups.

Table 4 shows the results concerning the differences within respondents with different level of education and the choose of the style for handling the conflict with their supervisor.

Table 4 Compare Means: Levels of Education – Conflict Management Styles

Report		COLL.S.	ACCOM.S.	COMP.S.	AV.S.	COMPR.S
Level of Education						
High school	Mean	4.32	3.12	3.46	3.48	4.07
	N	22	22	22	22	22
	Std. Deviation	.308	.554	.707	.600	.519
Student	Mean	4.23	3.11	3.73	3.30	4.13
	N	15	15	15	15	15
	Std. Deviation	.365	.786	.598	.667	.516
Higher education	Mean	4.01	2.99	3.19	3.14	3.73
	N	32	32	32	32	32
	Std. Deviation	.823	.674	.896	.746	.894
Master/PhD	Mean	4.15	2.87	3.00	3.20	3.84
	N	41	41	41	41	41
	Std. Deviation	.413	.677	.695	.584	.466
Total	Mean	4.15	2.99	3.25	3.25	3.89
	N	110	110	110	110	110
	Std. Deviation	.551	.668	.783	.652	.646

Souce: The table is generated as SPSS output



Respondents with level of education: high school and students prefer to use more the Compromising Style comparing with the respondents with other level of education.

As we can see from the table 5, respondents that have more than 1 year of work background and respondents that have less than 10 years of background, prefer to use more the Compromising Style to handle the conflict with their supervisor, in compare with respondents that have less than 1 year of work experience and more that 10 year of work experience.

Table 5 Compare Means: Years of Experience – Conflict Management Styles

Report						
Work Experience (year)		COLL.S.	ACCOM.S.	COMP.S.	AV.S.	COMPR.S.
< 1 year	Mean	4.15	3.11	3.45	3.26	3.88
	N	41	41	41	41	41
	Std. Deviation	.542	.669	.743	.691	.671
1-3 years	Mean	4.18	2.97	3.12	3.30	4.00
	N	33	33	33	33	33
	Std. Deviation	.414	.650	.783	.641	.519
4-6 years	Mean	4.24	2.95	2.92	3.44	4.02
	N	13	13	13	13	13
	Std. Deviation	.321	.934	.858	.488	.581
7-9 years	Mean	4.19	3.11	3.53	3.39	4.04
	N	6	6	6	6	6
	Std. Deviation	.334	.344	.327	.404	.188
>10 years	Mean	4.03	2.71	3.15	2.93	3.54
	N	17	17	17	17	17
	Std. Deviation	.922	.505	.847	.710	.858
Total	Mean	4.15	2.99	3.25	3.25	3.89
	N	110	110	110	110	110
	Std. Deviation	.551	.668	.783	.652	.646

Source: The table is generated as SPSS output



4.3 Regression Analysis

First step of the analysis consists in performing the reliability analysis. In terms of quantitative analysis, the Cronbach alpha coefficient has been found to be quite satisfactory in relation to all the five styles of the conflict management (Table 3 in Annex). According to the methodology for a tool to be considered valid, the Cronbach alpha coefficient value should be above 0.6. In our case this coefficient result above .0.6 which mean that the constructs measures are reliable.

The second step of analysis consist in performing the Pearson correlation, which will show the possible link within demographic factors and the styles of conflict management. As mentioned in the methodology, their relationship depends on certain intervals that determine the weakness or strength of their relationship. Value intervals of 0.70 and more consist of a very strong relationship; intervals from 0.50 to 0.69 consist of a significant relationship; intervals from 0.30 to 0.49 consist of a moderate relationship; intervals from 0.10 to 0.29 consist of a weak relationship; and <0.09 the relationship is considered negligible (Davis, 1971). As we can see from the table below, we can identify only one meaningful correlation within demographic factors and the styles of conflict management.

Table 6 Correlation Analysis

Correlations		Gender	Age	Level of Education	Work Experience	CMS
Gender	Pearson Correlation	1	.184	.087	.169	-.006
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.054	.365	.077	.951
	N	110	110	110	110	110
Age	Pearson Correlation	.184	1	-.252**	.549**	.079
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.054		.008	.000	.415
	N	110	110	110	110	110
Level of Education	Pearson Correlation	.087	-.252**	1	-.070	-.247**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.365	.008		.469	.009
	N	110	110	110	110	110
Work Experience	Pearson Correlation	.169	.549**	-.070	1	-.173
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.077	.000	.469		.071
	N	110	110	110	110	110
CMS	Pearson Correlation	-.006	.079	-.247**	-.173	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.951	.415	.009	.071	
	N	110	110	110	110	110

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: The table is generated as SPSS output

The meaningful relationship is between level of education and conflict management style (-.247**), but as we can see from the table the value show a weak relationship. In relation with conflict management style variables, the significant relationship is

identified between level of education and competing style (-.275**), but as we can see from the table the value show a weak relationship.

The last step of the analysis consist in performing the regression model to see the impact of level of education to the competing style.

Table 7 Regression Model

Model Summary ^a				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.275a	.076	.067	.756
a. Predictors: (Constant), Level of Education				
b. Dependent Variable: COMPS				

Source: The table is generated as SPSS output

In the summary table of regression analysis, the values of R Square is .076, this coefficient of determination indicates t hat the level of education explains 7.6% of the variance of the data. If we refer to the confidence interval it should be at the extent of 90%, 95% and 99%, we see that the model is within this interval (Sig. 0.004).

Table 8 Coefficients of the model

Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error			
1	(Constant)	7.574	1.456		5.203	.000
	Level of Education	-.189	.064	-.275	-2.975	.004
a. Dependent Variable: COMPS						

Source: The table is generated as SPSS output

In the table of the coefficients of the model, the coefficient **X1** (Level of Education) has the value, - .189. This means that for every unit of change on the variable **X1** when the other factors of the model are kept constant, the Competing style is impacted negatively by 0.189 units.

The regression equation is as follows:

$$Y = 7.574 - 0,189X_1$$



5 Discussion

According to the data analysis it's distinguished that there are two preferred styles to manage the conflict within the organization in the Albanian context compared with the five styles described by the literature, respectively collaborating and compromising style.

The data analysis results also show a correlation within the level of education and the style of conflict management. Specifically our study shows according to the correlation analysis that exists a low correlation within education level and Competing Style ($r = -0.275^{**}$).

According the regression analysis the results suggest that as the level of education of employees changes, the Competing style is impacted negatively (this component explained 7.6 % of the variance in Competing style).

Conclusion

Some empirical evidence concerning the use of two out of five conflict management style and the slightly impact of demographic factors (Level of education) on it. There are many international implications related with the conflict management approaches in different cultures based on the fact that each culture considers the styles of conflict management with different lenses. There are indirect methods used to preserve the relationships in collectivist cultures, meanwhile differences of directly opinions are managed openly in individualistic cultures. Based on the fact that we didn't found out an important impact of demographic factor on the choose of the style from employees to manage the struggle with their chief and the fact that the culture influences the handling of the conflict, for further research we will consider the influence of cultural factors on the choice for managing the conflict.

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