The Study of the Relationship Between Organizational Culture and Conflict Management

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Abstract: The purpose of this research is to study the relationship between the organizational culture and managers' conflict management styles in higher education centers in Bojnourd in school year 2010.The main hypothesis is: There is a relationship between organizational culture and managers conflict management styles in higher education centers in Bojnord. For this purpose, organizational culture is regarded as independent variable and management conflict styles as dependent variables.On basis of the goal, this study is considered as an applied research.Its methodology is surveying. Population includes total employees of higher education centers in Bojnourd in 2010. The sample group includes 170 employees who were sampled randomly, categorically as well as relationally by using Morgan-Krjsy Table. Data collection was performed through library and field studies. Data was gathered by means of organizational culture questionnaire based on Quinn & Gareth Model (36 items with 5 scores) in four dimensions (rational, participatory, ideological, hierarchical) and conflict management questionnaire based on Thomas Model (30 items with 5 scores) (Lickert scale). The questionnaires validity was determined based on management practitioners' view points. The reliability assessment was performed by using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient (91% for organizational culture questionnaire and 86% for conflict management questionnaire). SPSS software is used to analyze the data.Descriptive and interpretative methods were used (Maximum Likelihood Analysis of Variance).The findings show that there is a significant relationship between organizational culture and conflict management style.

Key words: Organizational culture rational · Participatory · Ideological · Hierarchical · Conflict management · Styles · Cooperation · Competition compromising · Avoidance · Concession

INTRODUCTION

Today in 3rd Millennium, higher education has taken important role as a basis for the sustainable development [1]. In these organizations,the employees are regarded as the main asset with considerable competing advantages and their peaceful,empathetic and cooperative relationships as well as creative solution of the conflicts are the most important factors of success for these organizations [2]. In the conflict process, one part feels that the other part's activities impedes his or her success and interests [3]. Conflict represents one's understanding of activities, goals, values, ideas, beliefs,desires, feelings distinguishable from the other's, leading to intervention,impediment and harm [4]. However, conflict roots from interaction among people in order to satisfy their needs in social gatherings. Thus the social relationship is conflicting by nature and people have to handle both similarities and differences as well as both friendliness and hostility [5]. Therefore, conflict is inevitable but this doesn't imply it is negative. It will be positive if it is well managed and it will be an advantage for the organization.In other word, conflict has both negative and positive aspects and its impact on the organization depends on how it is approached. So now there is no doubt that the most significant management skill needed is how to handle and control the conflicts. Conflict management is defined as a planning process to avoid likely conflicts and to handle it where it occurs [2]. In result, the conflict is not a problem but applying inefficient conflict management style by incapable managers leads to the problems. [6] However, conflict management style adoption depends on the unique organizational culture in which the manager operates [7] Organizational culture is defined as a well established collection of common theories, understanding, norms among the members of an organization which is distributed among the new members by training [8].

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Organizational culture is a collection of given values and patterns which helps the members of organization to understand acceptable and unacceptable actions. [9] Many researches have been performed about the relationship between organizational culture and conflict management style including followings.

Pusthuma [10] concludes that conflict management styles adoption is a cultural phenomenon and it differs among the cultures. Bureaucratic managers try to avoid conflicts by using strategies. Poasa [11] concluded that culture type affects on conflict management.

Given what we explained, the present study seeks to explore the relationship between organizational culture and conflict management styles in the higher education centers in Bojnourd. It should be noted that organizational culture parameter is defined as effective factor in the organization and it is considered as a developing concept which mainly contributes in development of organization, rooting from this idea that it is related to various processes in the organization and affects on them [12]. Organizational culture is regarded as the most efficient factor of organization success and one can explore the root of failure or success in this culture. [13] because organizational culture can empower the employees so that they may remove the basic inhibitors to survival in and adjustability to environment as well as may found internal processes and may establish organization survival on time [14].

On the other hand,the limited conflict within an organization signifies the organization empowerment, activation and stability. Without contradictory ideologies in the present complicated and extensive organizations,there would be no challenge to the opinions as well as no motivation to change in the organization and inevitably no innovation and creativity [15]. Then,conflict can either strengthen or inhibit welfare, growth and development of the organization [16], while mode of confrontation with the conflicts is also very important because accurate confrontation by the managers when a conflict emerges, it may lead to enhance motivation, improve temper, increase commitment to the task and on total,it may lead to higher employees' performance. Otherwise, it may lead to despair and discouragement [17]. Consequently, conflict management is regarded as very important ability of managers and their capability to confront with conflict and handle it takes a valuable role in their achievement. [2] As noted before, organizational culture parameter is an effective factor and can represent interpersonal relationship and interaction between members of an organization. So, understanding organizational culture is important as it helps to predict things such as how the people react to conflict [18]. There are perceived and instrumental conflicts which people assume as the sources of conflict. For example, in the individualist culture, a person believes the source of conflicts is instrumental by nature and accordingly, the subject of the conflict is discussed and a solution is tried for it. But in the communal cultures, the concept is regarded as the source of conflict and they try an indirect solution for the conflict [19]). Therefore, given that inaccurate mode of conflict management inhibits organization to have access to its goals and,on the contrary, efficient procedure can enhance the coordination among people,leading to the organization survival. It is indicated that the styles of conflict management are evaluated and organization culture is explored in order to select suitable mode of confrontation with the unavoidable conflicts. All these may result in improved knowledge about organizational culture and cultural factors. According to what was said above, the main hypothesis in this research is: There is a relationship between organizational culture and conflict management styles in higher education centers in Bojnourd.

The Research Theoretical Diagram:
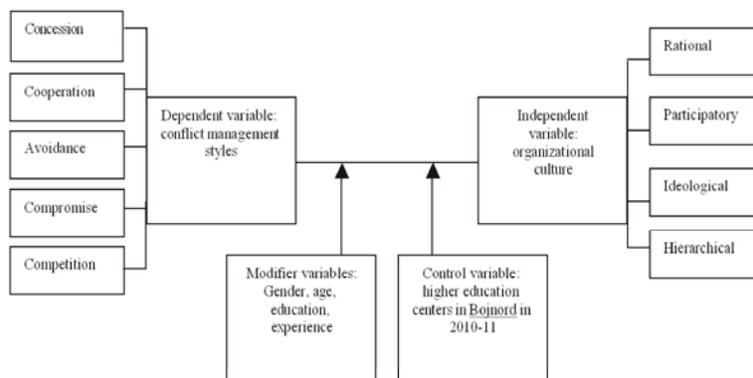
This diagram shows the relationship between organizational culture and conflict

Management styles in higher education centers in Bojnourd.Quinn & Gareth's culture model and Kenneth Thomas's conflict management styles have been adopted.

Quinn & Gareth Have Divided Organizational Culture into Four Groups:

Rational Culture: It seeks to realize the goals of the organization by using goal-based and guided style.

Participatory Culture: It aims to survive the group with participation in order to enhance relationship qualification.

Ideological Culture: It seeks the missions, growth and commitment to the values of organization with a charismatic leadership.

Hierarchical Culture: It tries to control and stabilize the organization by carrying out the commands and by meeting the rules and laws [20].

Kenneth Thomas proposes five main styles for conflict management. They include: concession, cooperation, avoidance, compromise and Competition [21]. There is a mix of "attention to self" and "attention to others" in each style [22].

- Concession: One rejects his or her interests and tries to meet another party's interest
- Cooperation: People try to gain mutual interests through problem solution and sharing the information and data.
- Avoidance: One tries to remove the conflict or to avoid the conflicting situation.
- Compromise: People try to achieve a mediatory situation by meeting mutual interests in order to solve the conflict
- Competition: One tries to win the conflict with the strongest tendency to win-fail process. [23].

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The present study is in applied form. It is regarded as descriptive-surveying- correlative forms due to its nature and the method of the research. The population includes 305 employees from the higher education centers in Bojnourd based on the space and time limit of the study. The population is divided into four categories (each related to a certain higher education center,that is, Azad,Medical Science,Payamnoor and Applied Science higher education centers). Sampling was done randomly based on Morgan-Krjsy Table (170 employees). The sampling group was given organizational culture and conflict management styles questionnaires. Organizational

Table 1: The sample by category

Population category	Population by category	Category ratio	Sample by category
Azad Univ.	123	41%	69
Medical Sc. Univ.	85	28%	48
Payamnoor Univ	49	16%	27
Applied Sc. Univ	48	15%	26
Total	305	100%	170

Table 2: The organizational culture and managers' conflict management styles prevalence in the studied higher education centers

			Organizational culture				
			Rational	Participatory	Ideological	Hierarchical	Total
Managers'conflict management styles	Avoidance	Count	5	5	4	6	20
		% of Total	2.7%	2.7%	2.2%	3.2%	10.8%
	Concession	Count	11	8	6	15	40
		% of Total	5.9%	4.3%	3.2%	8.1%	21.6%
	Competition	Count	5	6	13	39	63
		% of Total	2.7%	3.2%	7.0%	21.1%	34.1%
	Compromise	Count	5	5	5	7	22
		% of Total	2.7%	2.7%	2.7%	3.8%	11.9%
	Cooperation	Count	15	9	5	11	40
		% of Total	8.1%	4.9%	2.7%	5.9%	21.6%
Total		Count	41	33	33	78	185
		% of Total	22.2%	17.8%	17.8%	42.2%	100.0%

Table 3: Maximum Likelihood Analysis of Variance

Source	df	Chi-Square	Pr > ChiSq
Organizational culture	4	12.98	0.0114
Conflict management	3	13.08	0.0045
Organizational culture * conflict management	12	22.64	0.0309

Table 4: Parameter Estimate

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error	Chi-Square	Pr > ChiSq
Avoidance Rational organizational culture *	0.0579	0.3364	0.03	0.8634
Concession Rational organizational culture*	0.2013	0.2581	0.61	0.4355
competition Rational organizational culture*	-0.7503	0.3164	5.62	0.0177
compromise Rational organizational culture*	-0.0364	0.3322	0.01	0.9127
cooperation Rational organizational culture*	0.5275	0.2451	4.63	0.0314

Table 5: Parameter Estimate

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error	Chi-Square	Pr > ChiSq
Avoidance * Participatory organizational culture	0.1873	0.3377	0.31	0.5792
Concession *Participatory organizational culture	0.0122	0.2789	0.00	0.9650
competition *Participatory organizational culture	-0.4386	0.3017	2.11	0.1460
compromise *Participatory organizational culture	0.093	0.3336	0.08	0.7805
cooperation *Participatory organizational culture	0.1461	0.2726	0.29	0.5919

Table 6: Parameter Estimate

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error	Chi-Square	Pr > ChiSq
Ideological organizational culture * Avoidance	0.0292	0.3618	0.01	0.9356
Ideological organizational culture * Concession	-0.2104	0.3035	0.48	0.4881
Ideological organizational culture * competition	0.3997	0.2567	2.42	0.1195
Ideological organizational culture * compromise	0.158	0.3363	0.22	0.6384
Ideological organizational culture* cooperation	-0.3765	0.3206	1.38	0.2402

Table 6: Parameter Estimate

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error	Chi-Square	Pr > ChiSq
Hierarchical organizational culture * Avoidance	-0.2744	0.3128	0.77	0.3804
Hierarchical organizational culture * Concession	-0.0031	0.2325	0.00	0.9892
Hierarchical organizational culture * competition	0.7892	0.2062	14.65	0.001
Hierarchical organizational culture * compromise	-0.2146	0.2965	0.52	0.4694
Hierarchical organizational culture * cooperation	-0.2971	0.2491	1.42	0.2330

culture questionnaire include 36 questions in four categories (rational, participatory, ideological, hierarchical) with 5 scores based on Quinn-Gareth Model. Conflict management styles questionnaire include 30 questions with 5 scores.The validity is confirmed by management practitioners. Cronbach's Alpha Model is used to assess the reliability (91% for organizational culture questionnaire and 86% for conflict management styles questionnaire).The data descriptively and interpretatively is tested by Maximum Likelihood Analysis of Variance test and Parameter Estimate Test.

The Findings: Based on the employees demographic data obtained in this study, men population are more prevalent (61.8%). Other prevalent groups are as follows: 30-39 age

group (40.6 %), people with B.S. university degree (61.76 %), experience less than 10 years (60 %). Table 2 shows the rates of prevalence related to organizational culture and conflict management styles.

The Findings Related to the Main Hypothesis: There is a relationship between organizational culture and conflict management styles.

The above table show that there is a significant relationship between organizational culture and conflict management styles with Maximum Likelihood Analysis of Variance. Now, we estimate the parameters in order to determine the relationship between organizational cultures and conflict management styles.

The Findings Related to the First Minor Hypothesis:
There is a relationship between rational organizational culture and conflict management styles.

Based on the column related to the least level of significance and parameter rate, one can say that rational style of organizational culture has only relationship with conflict management styles of competition and cooperation. The sign of estimation implies that in organizations with rational culture, the conflict management of competition is used lower. In contrast, in organizations with rational culture, the conflict management style of cooperation is used more frequently by the managers.

The Findings Related to the 2nd Minor Hypothesis: There is a relationship between participatory organizational culture and conflict management styles.

Given that neither of the numbers is less than 0.05, the above hypothesis is rejected. It means that there is no significant relationship between participatory organizational culture and any styles of conflict management in the higher education centers.

The Findings Related to the 3rd Minor Hypothesis:
There is a relationship between ideological organizational culture and conflict management styles.

Given that neither of the numbers is less than 0.05, the above hypothesis is rejected. It means that there is no significant relationship between ideological organizational culture and any of styles of conflict management in the higher education centers.

The Findings Related to the 4th Minor Hypothesis:
There is a relationship between hierarchical organizational culture and conflict management styles.

Based on the column related to the least level of significance and parameter rate, one can say that hierarchical style of organizational culture is related only with competition style of conflict management. The sign of estimation implies that in organizations with hierarchical culture, the competition style of conflict management is used more frequently.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The purpose of the study is to explore the relationship between organizational culture and conflict management styles in higher education centers in Bojnourd. The findings show that the prevalent organizational cultures are hierarchical, rational, ideological and participatory cultures. The prevalent conflict management styles are competition, compromise, cooperation, consensus and avoidance styles.

- The maximum likelihood analysis of variance shows that there is a relationship between organizational culture and conflict management styles and one can conclude that the dominant organizational culture in the studied higher education centers motivates the manager to select certain conflict management styles.

These Results Comply with Following Researches: Poasa [11], Pasthuma [10] showing that there is a relationship between organizational culture and conflict management style.

Gillespie [24], Yilmaz & Ergan [25], Lawrence [26], Lawson [27], Bahamonde [28] and Maull [29], showing that there is a relationship between organizational culture and customer satisfaction, organization performance, carrying out 6zigma model, communicational skills, efficiency and effectiveness,and quality improvement.

- The estimated parameters showed that there is an inversed relationship between rational style of organizational culture and competition style of conflict management. It means that more rationality involves less use of competition style of conflict management. Rational culture is also directly related with the cooperation style of conflict management.It means that more rationality involves more use of cooperation style of conflict management.

These findings comply with Yazdkhasti *et al* [30], Ahmadi *et al* [31], Lawrence *et al* [23] showing that there is a relationship between rational organizational culture and acceptance rate of dominant quality management,school improvement and carrying out 6zigma model.

- The estimated parameters showed that there is no relationship between participatory organizational culture and conflict management styles.
- The estimated parameters showed that there is no relationship between ideological organizational culture and conflict management styles.

- The estimated parameters showed that there is a direct relationship between hierarchical organizational culture and competition style of conflict management.It means that more prevalent hierarchical organizational culture involves more use of competition style of conflict management.

These findings comply with Yazdkhasti *et al* [30], Ahmadi *et al* [31], Lawrence *et al* [26] showing that there is a relationship between hierarchical organizational culture and acceptance rate of dominant quality management, school improvement and carrying out 6zigma model.

Suggestions:

- It is confirmed that organizational culture impacts on the selection of conflict management style.So it is suggested to higher education centers to identify ideal organizational culture and its parameters in order to make their current culture closer to the ideal one and the conflict management style may be modified accordingly.
- The first minor hypothesis is confirmed and evidently, rational culture is the most prevalent after hierarchical one.So it is suggested to the studied centers to identify this culture and its non functional parameters because solid efficiency is considered more important than quality of relationship in a rational organization culture.
- It is obvious that participatory culture is the least prevalent.So it is suggested to the authorities to identify this culture and its parameters due to its impact on conflict management constructive style selection.
- There is ideological culture in the studied centers.The leadership style in this culture is individualistic and vulnerable and the decision is made by judgment.So it is suggested to the studied centers to identify this culture and its non functional parameters.
- It is seen that the fourth minor hypothesis is confirmed and evidently the hierarchical culture is the most prevalent in the studied centers. It is suggested that the authorities take actions to change this culture because its non functional parameters affect on the organization.

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