Intergroup Conflict Handling Modes in Communication Management

P. M. Chawan, Aniruddha P. Tekade, Pankaj R. Ingle

Abstract: The paper aims to analyses the types of conflicts that generally occur during the lifecycle of a project. Particularly if the project belongs to the field of Information Technology where computation plays the indistinguishable part throughout the lifecycle, conflicts are unavoidable; rather they can be resolved with a good mindset and good managerial skills. All people can benefit, both personally and professionally, from learning conflict management skills. Typically we respond to conflict by using one of five modes: Compromising, Collaborating, Competing, Avoiding, Accommodating.

The study examined the intergroup conflict between R&D managers and non - managers in four corporate companies, as well as the relationship between each of the five conflict-handling modes: competition, accommodation, sharing, collaboration, and avoidance, with the following variables:
1) Conflict frequency,
2) Job satisfaction, and
3) Job performance

Keywords: Assertiveness, cooperation, TKI, Nonthreatening confrontation, conflict frequencies.

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Basic definition of Conflict - Any situation where your concerns or desires differ from another person's in the context of projects. Mathematically whenever there are two or more than two entities try to perform the same actions simultaneously and their objectives of the actions aim to work out the same target which in turn is a part of another last target of the whole project then conflicts generates. The research findings indicate that intergroup conflicts were in the areas of goals, reward, control, authority, and insufficient assistance from technical support staff. Furthermore, intergroup conflict and conflict management were found to have both positive and negative consequences. Competition and avoidance were found to have exacerbated the frequency of conflict, and they had a negative impact on performance. Collaboration was found to have ameliorated the frequency of conflict, and it had a rather high positive impact on performance. Both sharing

and accommodation were found to be inconsistently related to conflict frequency, and they had an inconsistent impact on performance. For three organizations, job satisfaction was negatively related to conflict frequency and avoidance while it was negatively related to accommodation based on one sample of subjects from one organization only. Competition, sharing, and collaboration were not found to be significantly related to job satisfaction.   Prior research has indicated an increased amount of conflicts among groups using group support systems. This is not necessarily good or bad. So the feasible theory of Darwin and Human resources says - conflict should not be reduced, eliminated, or avoided, but properly targeted and managed. The historical studies in this sector have identified two dimensions of conflict: *issue-based and interpersonal.*

Hence this paper is having plan to achieve following objectives –
✓ Become more aware of your own conflict handling mode
✓ Recognize the conflict handling modes of others
✓ Assess conflict situations
✓ Practice using different conflict handling modes

B. Following are the observed and well surveyed causes of conflicts in an project –
1.   Differences in goals
Professionals stress the generation of knowledge, while administrators emphasize the application of knowledge.
2.   Differences in controls
Administrators feel that control should be exercised from those in the upper echelons to those in the lower hierarchy. In contrast, professionals emphasize that, due to their technical expertise, only members within the same profession should exercise control over work.
3.   Differences in reward structure
Administrators were accorded greater status in an organization due to their "line" function. Nonmanagerial scientists and engineers were faced with the dilemma of seeking opportunities in the managerial function at the expense of their professional careers, or else maintain their professional status at the expense of the greater organizational status associated with administrative positions.
4.   Differences in authority relationships.
Administrators' exercised organizational authority derived from their executive positions.

Professionals valued their authority, which was based on their technical competence and expertise, and did not want their professional authority undermined by organizational authority. The model presupposes that intergroup conflict has both functional and dysfunctional effects on the employees and the organization. Furthermore, it presupposes that conflict handling can either exacerbate or ameliorate the consequences of conflict, while producing a set of functional and dysfunctional effects of its own.
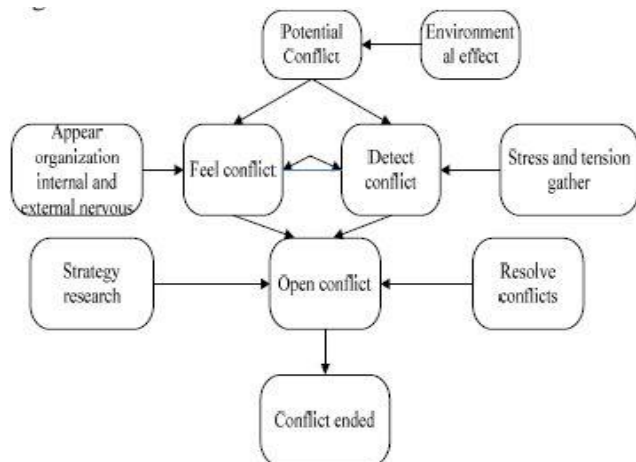

Fig.1: The Dynamic process of forming channel conflict

The channel conflict is a gradual process of development, which has dynamic characteristics. PangDi, an American scholar, put forward "five stages mode". He pointed out that the development of the channel conflict will go through five identifiable stages, which include potential conflict, perceived conflict, feel conflict, open conflict and the end of conflict. As shown in Fig 1. The formation of channel conflict usually go through the above five process, but the development of the channel conflict is not a fixed process. For example, some channel conflicts maybe directly enter into feel conflict or open conflict in the start, instead of going through all the above five process.

II. HYPOTHESIS

Following previous research on the subject of conflict and conflict management, 18 hypotheses were formulated as follows:

Hypothesis 1: R&D managers and R&D non-managerial scientists and engineers should be well aware of the various issues of conflict and share similar perceptions of the frequencies with which various conflict issues occur.

Hypothesis 2: There is a positive association between the proportion of time that R&D managers use a competitive mode of conflict handling and the frequency with which conflict occurs.

Hypothesis 3: There is a negative association between the proportion of time that R&D managers use an accommodative mode of conflict handling and the frequency with which conflict occurs.

Hypothesis 4: The relationship between the proportion of

time that a sharing mode of conflict handling is used and the frequency with which conflict occurs is sometimes positive, sometimes negative.

Hypothesis 5: There is a negative association between the proportion of time that a collaborative mode of conflict handling is used and the frequency with which conflict occurs.

Hypothesis 6: There is a positive association between the proportion of time that an avoidant mode of conflict handling is used and the frequency with which conflict occurs.

Hypothesis 7: There is a negative association between the frequency of intergroup conflict and job satisfaction.

Hypothesis 8: There is a negative association between the proportion of time that a competitive mode of conflict handling is used by R&D managers and job satisfaction experienced by nonmanagers.

Hypothesis 9: There is a positive association between the proportion of time that an accommodative mode of conflict handling is used by R&D managers and job satisfaction experienced by nonmanagers.

Hypothesis 10: The proportion of time that a sharing mode of intergroup conflict handling is used bears no relationship to job satisfaction experienced by both R&D managers and nonmanagers.

Hypothesis 11: There is a positive association between the proportion of time that a collaborative mode of conflict handling is used to deal with intergroup conflict and job satisfaction.

Hypothesis 12: There is a negative association between the proportion of time that an avoidant mode of conflict handling is used to deal with intergroup conflict and job satisfaction.

Hypothesis 13: Frequent intergroup conflict tends to have a negative impact on the performance of both R&D managers and R&D nonmanagers.

Hypothesis 14: The use of a competitive mode of conflict handling by R&D managers has a negative impact on the performance of both R&D managers and nonmanagers.

Hypothesis 15: An accommodative mode of conflict handling used by R&D managers has a positive impact on the performance of R&D non-managerial scientists and engineers.

Hypothesis 16: The use of a sharing mode of conflict handling to deal with intergroup conflict bears no relationship to the performance of either group.

Hypothesis 17: The use of a collaborative mode of conflict handling to deal with intergroup conflict has a positive impact on the performance of both groups.

Hypothesis 18: The use of an avoidant mode of conflict handling to deal with intergroup conflict has a negative impact on the performance of both groups.

III. HANDLING MODES

What modes do people use to address conflict?

All people can benefit, both personally and professionally, from learning conflict management skills. Typically we respond to conflict by using one of five modes:

1. *Compromising*
2. *Collaborating*
3. *Competing*
4. *Avoiding*
5. *Accommodating*

Each of these modes can be characterized by two scales: assertiveness and cooperation. None of these modes is characterizing her/his model for conflict management. A general conceptual model of the subject on conflict and conflict management is illustrated in Fig. 1wrong to use, but there are right and wrong times to use each. The following section describes the five modes.
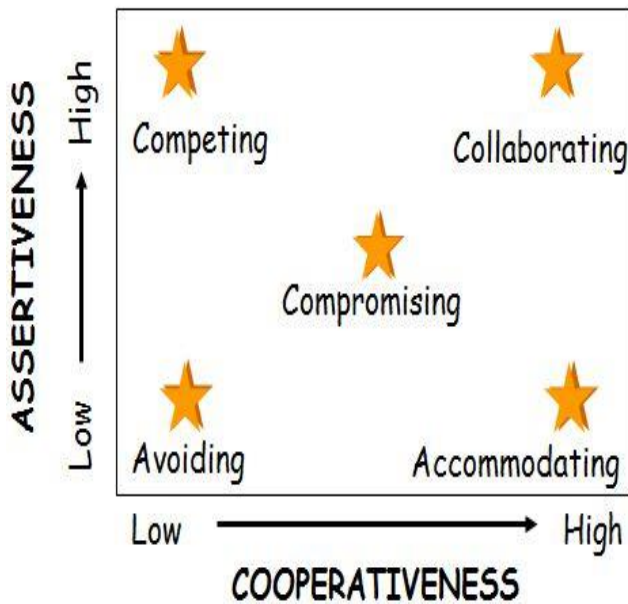

Fig.1: 5 conflict handling modes in project management

The model presupposes that intergroup conflict arises between R&D managers and nonmanagers due to differences in orientations and organizational positions.

How to discern your conflict mode?
The Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (TKI) is a widely used assessment for determining the conflict modes. The assessment takes less than fifteen minutes to yield for determining conflict modes. The assessment takes less than fifteen minutes to complete and yields conflict scores in the areas of avoiding, competing, compromising, accommodating, and collaborating.

COMPROMISING

The compromising mode is moderate assertiveness and moderate cooperation. Some people define compromise as "giving up more than you want," while others see compromise

as both parties winning. Times when the compromising mode is appropriate are when you are dealing with issues of moderate importance, when you have equal power status, or when you have a strong commitment for resolution. Compromising mode can also be used as a temporary solution when there are time constraints. The skills that are included by this context are featured with moderate importance, equal power where strong commitments are required, temporary solutions, and time constraints, backup. In general words, it's a "let's make a deal type of approach".

Skills required for Compromising mode
Negotiating
Finding a middle ground
Assessing value
Making concessions

Disadvantage if Compromising skills are overused
Lose big picture/ long-term goals
Lack of values/trust
Cynical climate

Disadvantage if Compromising skills are underused
Unnecessary confrontations
Frequent power struggles
Unable to negotiate effectively

COLLABORATING

The well popular saying when it is to be worked out as a team, "Two heads are better than one". The collaborating mode is high assertiveness and high cooperation. Collaboration has been described as "putting an idea on top of an idea on top of an idea…in order to achieve the best solution to a conflict." The best solution is defined as a creative solution to the conflict that would not have been generated by a single individual. With such a positive outcome for collaboration, some people will profess that the collaboration mode is always the best conflict mode to use. However, collaborating takes a great deal of time and energy. Therefore, the collaborating mode should be used when the conflict warrants the time and energy. For example, if your team is establishing initial parameters for how to work effectively together, then using the collaborating mode could be quite useful. On the other hand, if your team is in conflict about where to go to lunch today, the time and energy necessary to collaboratively resolve the conflict is probably not beneficial. Times when the collaborative mode is appropriate are when the conflict is important to the people who are constructing an integrative solution, when the issues are too important to compromise, when merging perspectives, when gaining commitment, when improving relationships, or when learning.

Collaboration Skills

Active listening
Nonthreatening confrontation
Identifying concerns
Analyzing input

Disadvantages if Collaborating skills are overused

Too much time on trivial matters
Diffused responsibility
Other may take advantage
Work overload

Disadvantages if collaborating skills are underused

Deprived of mutual gains
Lack of commitment
Low empowerment
Loss of innovation

COMPETING

The competing conflict mode is high assertiveness and low cooperation. Times when the competing mode is appropriate are when quick action needs to be taken, when unpopular decisions need to be made, when vital issues must be handled, or when one is protecting self-interests. In simple words, "My way or the highway". This characterizes with Quick Action, Unpopular decisions, vital issues, Protection.

Competing Skills

Using rank or influence
Asserting your opinions and feelings
Standing your ground
Stating your position clearly

Overuse of Competing Skills

Lack of feedback
Reduced learning
Low empowerment
Surrounded by "yes women/men"

Underuse of Competing Skills

Restricted influence
Indecision
Slow to act
Contributions withheld

AVOIDING

The avoiding mode is low assertiveness and low cooperation. Many times people will avoid conflicts out of fear of engaging in a conflict or because they do not have confidence in their conflict management skills. Times when the avoiding mode is appropriate are when you have issues of low importance, to reduce tensions, to buy some time, or when you are in a position of lower power.

Avoiding Skills

Ability to withdraw
Ability to sidestep issues
Ability to leave things unresolved
Sense of timing

Disadvantages if avoiding skills are overused
Lack of input from you
Decisions made by default
Issues fester
Cautious climate

Disadvantages if avoiding skills are underused
Hostility/hurt feelings
Too many causes
Lack of prioritization/delegation

ACCOMMODATING

The accommodating mode is low assertiveness and high cooperation. Times when the accommodating mode is appropriate are to show reasonableness, develop performance, create good will, or keep peace. Some people use the accommodating mode when the issue or outcome is of low importance to them. The accommodating mode can be problematic when one uses the mode to "keep a tally" or to be a martyr. For example, if you keep a list of the number of times you have accommodated someone and then you expect that person to realize, without your communicating to the person, that she/he should now accommodate you.

Accommodating Skills

Forgetting your desires
Selflessness
Ability to yield
Obeying orders

Disadvantages if Accommodating Skills are overused

Ideas get little attention
Restricted influence
Loss of contribution
Anarchy

Disadvantages if Accommodating Skills are underused

Lack of rapport
Low morale
Exceptions not recognized
Unable to yield

IV. CONCLUSION

In sum, this research indicates that intergroup conflicts between R&D managers and nonmanagers were in the areas of goals, reward, control, authority, and insufficient assistance from technical support staff. In all four participating organizations, the frequency with which most conflict issues occurred was only moderate. Intergroup conflict and conflict management were found to have both positive and negative consequences. For three organizations, job satisfaction was found to be negatively related to conflict frequency and avoidance. Job satisfaction was found to be negatively related to accommodation based the data from the nonmanagers of one organization only; therefore, the relationship between these two variables should be further examined in future research. Competition, sharing, and collaboration were not found to be significantly related to job satisfaction. Competition and avoidance were found to have exacerbated the frequency of conflict, and they had a negative impact on performance. Collaboration was found toHave ameliorated the frequency of conflict, and it had a rather high positive impact on performance. The results also indicated a situational approach to conflict management.

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