Organizational conflict and task groups behavior

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Abstract

The purpose of this project was reviewing the effect of organizational conflict on task groups' behavior. Samples of this study were employees of a public company of Iran who have had experience in task groups and committees. This study is applied and causative. The researcher has done a review of literature and also prepared a questionnaire based on 5- Likert. Also, 113 questionnaires were collected and analyzed as sample. Data have been analyzed by using linear regression method, Durbin-Watson test and Kolmogrov — Smirnov Test. The findings indicated that there was a reversal relation among relational conflict and avoidance, compromise and confidence. But there wasn't any relationship between self-devotion changes of organizational relations and cooperation. On the other hand, task conflict had reversal relation to avoidance, compromise and confidence, but there was direct relation in self-devotion, organizational relational change, and collaboration.

Keywords: conflict management, task conflict, relational conflict, group behavior.

Introduction

Along with complexity in organizations' environment, development of global competition and also complexity decisions, organizations should consider new forms of structure to reduce costs and also increase flexibility and response to customers' demands, shareholders, suppliers, etc in order to become more effective. Hence, form and organization structure should move to structures based on task groups. Combination of groups plays an important role in effective performance of an organization (Khaef-o-lahi & Hadizadeh Moghadam, 2003, p.17). The initial motivation of this study derived from theory of group process (Parayita et al, 2009, p 96).

Literature Review

Knight et al. (1999, p.97) contend that group processes are important because they "provide greater efficiency" (e.g. reducing costs or increasing speed in decision-making) and "effectiveness" (e.g. making better decisions), and argue that team diversity affects strategic consensus through group processes. According to Goldstein definition, group is two or more people in cooperation and dependency to obtain certain purpose (Gladstein, 1984, p 451).

Group cohesiveness, that is unity among group members, could be useful or harmful for an organization. Certain rate of cohesiveness could make a group as a dynamic team; but excess cohesiveness of group could develop inter-group thought or group-thought and don't leave tendency to cooperate for critical thought (Forsite, 2002, p. 247). When groups were succeed, they had potential ability to present more advantages such as more flexibility and creative, and if they fail, they will be lost considerable resources. Hence, organizations should be attended to maximize possibility of groups succeed. One of the simple ways is concentration on groups' members. In fact, succeed of group subjects to optimal combination of people that they are able to co-operate (Kichuk, 1998, p. 98).

Many researchers in behavior sciences pointed

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out the importance of conflict in group activities and they believed that conflict is unavoidable affair until organizations use task groups. And meanwhile, conflict has negative and positive effects on people performance and organizations. Therefore, correct and effective application of conflict cause to improve performance and enhance safety level of organization and its ineffective application cause to reduce performance and create challenge and tension in organization (Khaef-o-lahi and Hadizadeh Moghadam, 2003, p. 18).

Conflicts can have potentially contradictory effects on social exchange. On the one hand, conflicts may improve decision-making quality because of the different opinions brought into the process; on the other hand, conflicts may also create interpersonal tension and generate distress among teammates because they can easily get people emotionally involved (Liu et al., 2008, p. 230).

There are many definitions about conflict and conflict management. In one definition, conflict is perception process and or feeling about inconsistency among people, groups or organizations, that it leads to hidden or clear behavior, but it was conflict in both parties (Mirkamali, 2000, p. 161). Puntam defines conflict in this way: interactions of people that they are interacted together and they have different ideas in main purposes, sub purposes and values, and people imagine others as potential barrier in their purposes (Kiak joori & Aghajani, 2004, p. 82). Conflicts are applicable that they are emphasized about group aim and they improve performance (Seyed Javadin and Amir Kabiri, 2002, p. 143). Another type of conflict is barrier in organizational performance; this group of conflicts isn't applicable and they are destructive forms of conflict. They were undesirable, and manager had to resolve them (Kritner and Kiniky, 2011, p. 390). Puntam and Powel examined conflict in view of relational. Relationship was introduced as one of the 5 components in conflict position. Other components are: agent attitudes (beliefs, skills, and recognition style), conflict problems, relational variables (confidence, authority, dependency) and content factors (organizational norms, conflict subject) (Oozkalp et al., 2009, p. 422).

Theorists believe that there are two major types of conflicts, although they label them in different ways. Deutsch (1980) labeled them cooperative versus competitive; Amason (1996) called them cognitive versus affective conflicts; and Jehn (1995, 1997) and Pinkley (1990) labeled those two types of conflicts as task and relationship conflicts (Liu et al., 2008, P. 230). Task conflict is as understanding of differences among group members about decision contents (i.e. working problems) and it consists of different ideas, beliefs and attitudes (views). Researchers believed that task conflict has positive relationship to quality of decision, understanding and obligation in relation (Parayitam, 2009, p. 99). They defined task conflicts as awareness of members about differences in done tasks. Studies indicated that results of task conflicts about organizational findings are two-sides and combined. On the one hand, task conflict has potential for negative effect on satisfaction and demand of employees to survive in organization. On the other hand, task conflicts have positive effects on organizational results and grouping findings. For example, amount or balanced level of task conflict is useful in group performance, increase obligation unity and satisfaction (D. Charh and Marx, 2001).

Relational conflict, that called affective conflicts, is as understanding of inconsistency among people. And generally it consists of tension, discomfort, and enemy among team members (Parayitam, 2009, p. 99). Relational conflicts are related to differences based on personal and social problems that they aren't related to work. Pondy (1967) classified three conceptual models in official organizations:

1. Bargaining model: conflict among interested groups that are distinction in competition.

2. Bureaucratic model: conflicts between head and subordinators or during each vertical range in organizational hierarchy.

3. Systemic model: conflicts among parts in relations or tasks, particularly conformity difficulties (Oozkalpo et al., 2009, p. 422).

Conflicts management can be define this: it is process that organization's employees located in dynamic according to structural, motivational and management conditions. On the other hand, contract management is creating dynamic balance in human power (Haghighi et al., 2006, p. 60).

One of the management problems in conflict is that two dimensions of conflict, inherent (factual) and effective conflict, are related positively. Effective conflict recognized as contrast in interpersonal relations and it happens when organizations' members attended to their feelings and affections in group loyalty, group performance and

task obligation in contrast. On the other hand, inherent conflicts as disagreement between tasks of organization's members or content problems, improves group performance through better solutions and procedures of succeed obtaining (Oozkalp et al., 2009, p. 422).

Managers and employees in organization show different behaviors as it emerge conflicts and it makes different strategies, that there are the most important:

Avoidance: this kind of behavior is related to ignore conflict, generally it may be ignore conflict, particularly when intervene in it cause to improve quarrelsome and discussion, or it is enough less important that it has no value to spend time and energy and it resolve by parties, simply. Here, the best way isn't intervening, but it is better to allow it naturally happens.

Change of organizational relations: philosophy of this method is related to change of organizational relations in order to reduce conflicts and or its roots. This change can be related to job tasks, advantages distinction, and related to certain units to other units. On the other hand, conflict leads to change in task relations and organizational relations and involved groups.

Compromise: more conflicts can be resolve via compromise and invite conflict parties to compromise and can be apply employers' energy to compromise organization. Compromise in organization cause to become friendly, cooperative and closer atmosphere and it improve mental health of employees, that its result is reduction of destructive conflicts in organization (Soltani ,1999, p.35).

Confidence and respect: confidence in working environment is related to positive expectations, that people have different behavior of organizational based on relations, experiences and dependencies. There are some evidences that indicated confidence is a concept and social structure and it creates in order to predict more among groups (Atkinson & Butcher, 2003).

Self-devotion: in this method, one party prefers another advantage party. On the other words, one devotes herself/himself to continue relations, meanwhile, try to give score. In this method, one is winning and other is losing (Moshabaki, 2007, p. 334).

Cooperation/ Collaboration: when one or both parties have more tendencies to reach purpose and their advantages, and they consider further purposes and its advantages, their direction will be into coop-

eration. This procedure pointed out all expectations and preferences of both parties in conflict. On the other hand, cooperation is about problem, brought all problems about conflict and reviews them in free setting and finally obtains a solution to unity different ideas (Izadi Yazdan Abadi, 2001, p.209).

When it happen conflict in group, the attempts were acceptable for one or more other members and hence it can be against them. Internal conflict in group has many reasons. Some theorists emphasized relation difficulties, other relied on organizational structure and some pointed out social and mental factors. Unfortunately, all of factors interact and they create conflict and hence, it is impossible to prepare list of potential difficult fields.

If members concluded that disagreement derived group attempts to make decision, properly. This disagreement didn't result to real conflict, but if participants attributed disagreement to incapability, pugnacious and disputatious others, then a simple disagreement may continue to conflict level (Forsite, 2002, p.196).

Parayitam et al (2009), in their research, relational conflict and agreement-seeking behavior in Chinese top management teams, indicated that counteract responsibility among administrative managers and conflict response influence organization advantages. The results of this project show that task conflict in top management have related to relational conflict positively and related to compromise behavior negatively.

In study which was done by Liu et al (2009) about conflict in top management teams and team/firm outcomes, his findings indicated that relational conflict have reduce teams cohesiveness and relational conflict and task conflict influenced on company performance negatively. Findings of relational conflict indicated that using of compromise procedure can be help to reduce negative effects of relational conflict on cohesiveness of top management teams and company performance. But avoidance style of team and company will be reducing both of them.

Methodology

This study is in causative category research, and its purpose is based on application. Data of this study are collected by using questionnaire. In the questionnaire, 22 questions were designed and arranged base on rate scale and 5-rate Likert scale (Parayitam, 2009). To measure validity, fac-

tor analysis method was used after improvement of related experts.

To measure reliability, Cronbach Alpha method was used with the coefficient of 0.889.

Sample of this study consisted of 607 employers of public company. All samples were calculated by using Cochran relation and number of sample was determined based on this relation. Number of statistical samples was 113 by Cochran formula.

Data analysis including correlation calculation to discover relationship between conflict and six types of work group behaviors; Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test to study condition of application of regression model; and multi-regression model to study type of relation between independent variable (conflict) and dependent variables (work group behaviors).

Analysis of results was done by using SPSS software in two levels, descriptive and inductive, and in inductive level, it was used linear regression, Durbin-Watson test and Komologorov − Smirnov test.

Based on figure (1), the present study consists of 12 hypotheses by selection two kinds of conflict and six kinds of people behaviors in groups.

H1: relational conflict significantly influences avoidance of work group.

H2: task conflict significantly influences avoidance of work group.

H3: relational conflict significantly influences compromising of work group.

H4: task conflict significantly influences compromising of work group.

H5: relational conflict significantly influences confidence and respect of work group.

H6: task conflict significantly influences confidence and respect of work group.

H7: relational conflict significantly influences self-devotion of work group.

H8: task conflict significantly influences self-devotion of work group.

H9: relational conflict significantly influences change of organizational relations of work group.

H10: task conflict significantly influences change of organizational relations of work group.

H11: relational conflict significantly influences collaboration level of work group members.

H12: task conflict significantly influences collaboration level of work group members.

Results

According to statistical analysis, correlation between the research variables is significant in many cases. Kolmogorov-Smirnov test to study normality of the data shows that the data are normal (Table.1).
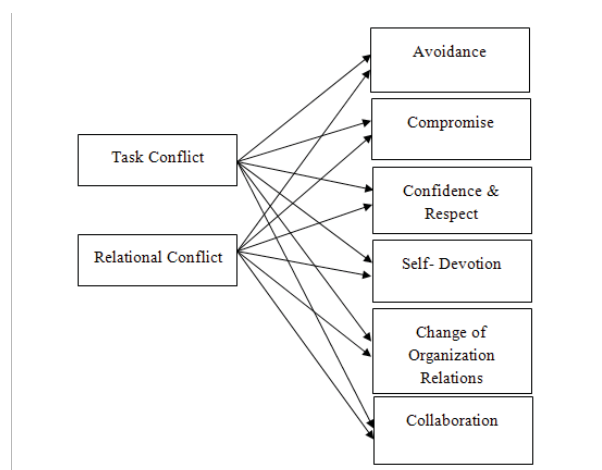

Figure 1. Conceptual model of the research

Table 1. Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test

	Avoidance	Trust	Tolerance	Organizational relationships change	Compromise	Collaboration
N	113	113	113	113	113	113
Normal Parameters[a] Mean	2.6313	2.6961	2.9621	3.3306	3.0688	3.0540
S.D	.98836	.96830	.89999	.80618	.85775	.80099
Most Extreme Absolute	.110	.118	.114	.101	.093	.079
Differences Positive	.110	.118	.114	.101	.050	.060
Negative	-.080	-.097	-.092	-.086	-.093	-.079
Kolmogorove-Smirnov Z	1.171	1.253	1.213	1.071	.990	.837
Asmp.Sig. (2-tailed)	.129	.087	.105	.202	.281	.485

H1. Relational conflict significantly influences avoidance of work group.

In according to statistical results in the following table, it can be claimed that there is neg-

ative and meaningful relation between relational conflict variable (-0.570) and avoidance variable in meaningful level. Coefficient of these two variables is 0.325 that indicated that 32 percent changes were determined in avoidance variable via relational conflict variable (Table.2).

Table 2. Results of regression test between relational conflict and avoidance variable.

Dependent variable	Independent variable	Regression coefficient	Meaningful level	Index co-efficient	Frequency	Meaningful level	Durbin-Watson
Avoidance	Relational conflict	-0.570	0.000	0.325	53.492	0.000	1.989

H2.Task conflict significantly influences avoidance of work group.

With regards to statistical results of the following table, it can be claimed that there is negative and meaningful relation between task conflict variable (-0.748) and avoidance variable in meaningful level (0.05). Coefficient of this variable is 0.560 that stated 56 percent changes were determined in avoidance variable via task conflict (Table.3).

H3. Relational conflict significantly influences compromising of work group.

In according to statistical results in the following table, it can be claimed that there is negative and meaningful relation between relational conflict variable (-0.511) and compromise variable in meaningful level. Coefficient of these two variables is 0.262 that indicated that 26 percent changes were determined in compromise variable via relational conflict variable (Table.4).

Table 3. Results of regression test between task conflict and avoidance variable

Dependent variable	Independent variable	Regression coefficient	Meaningful level	Index coefficient	Frequency	Meaningful level	Durbin-Watson
Avoidance	task conflict	-0.748	0.000	0.560	141.074	0.000	1.822

Table 4. Results of regression test between relational conflict and compromise variable

Dependent variable	Independent variable	Regression coefficient	Meaningful level	Index coefficient	Frequency	Meaning-ful level	Durbin-Watson
compromise	relational conflict	-0.511	0.000	0.262	39.328	0.000	1.974

H4. Task conflict significantly influences compromising of work group.

By regarding to statistical results of table (5), it can be claimed that there is negative and meaningful relation between task conflict variable (-0.645) and compromise variable in meaningful level (0.05). Coefficient of this variable is 0.416 that stated 41 percent changes were determined in compromise variable via task conflict (Table.5).

H5: Relational conflict significantly influences confidence and respect of work group.

With regards to statistical results of the following table, it can be contended that there is negative and meaningful relation between relational conflict variable (-0.549) and confidence

variable and respect in meaningful level (0.05). Coefficient of this variable is 0.301 that stated 30 percent changes were determined in confidence and respect variable via relational conflict (Table.6).

H6: Task conflict significantly influences confidence and respect of work group.

With regards to statistical results of the following table, it can be contended that there is negative and meaningful relation between task conflict variable (-0.466) and confidence variable and respect in meaningful level (0.05). Coefficient of this variable is 0.217 that stated 21 percent changes were determined in confidence and respect variable via task conflict (Table.7).

Table 5. Results of regression test between task conflict and compromise variable

Dependent variable	Independent variable	Regression coefficient	Meaningful level	Index coefficient	Frequency	Meaningful level	Durbin-Watson
compromise	task conflict	-0.645	0.000	0.416	79.031	0.000	2.036

Table 6. Results of regression test between relational conflict and confidence variable

Dependent variable	Independent variable	Regression coefficient	Meaningful level	Index co-efficient	Frequency	Meaningful level	Durbin-Watson
confidence	relational conflict	-0.549	0.000	0.301	47.818	0.000	2.166

Table 7. Results of regression test between task conflict and confidence variable

Dependent variable	Independent variable	Regression coefficient	Meaningful level	Index co-efficient	Frequency	Meaningful level	Durbin-Watson
confidence	task conflict	-0.466	0.000	0.217	30.794	0.000	1.966

H7: Relational conflict significantly influences self-devotion of work group.

With regards to statistical results of the following table, it can be claimed that there is no meaningful relation between relational conflict variable and self-devotion, because meaningful level is more than (0.05). Therefore, there is no linear relation between two variables. On the other hand, the meaningful level (0.110) is more than (0.05) that it's indicated that there is no effect on relational conflict on self-devotion variable (Table 8).

H8: Task conflict significantly influences self-devotion of work group.

With regards to statistical results of the following table, it can be claimed that there is negative and meaningful relation between task conflict variable (-0.352) and self-devotion variable in meaningful level (0.05). Coefficient of this variable is 0.124 that stated 12 percent changes were determined in self-devotion variable via task conflict (Table.9).

Table 8. Results of regression test between relational conflict and self-devotion variable

Dependent variable	Independent variable	Regression coefficient	Meaningful level	Index coefficient	Frequency	Meaningful level	Durbin-Watson
self-devotion	relational conflict	-0.151	0.110	0.023	2.593	0.110	2.103

Table 9. Results of regression test between task conflict and self-devotion variable

Dependent variable	Independent variable	Regression coefficient	Meaningful level	Index co-efficient	Frequency	Meaningful level	Durbin-Watson
self-devotion	task conflict	0.352	0.000	0.124	15.653	0.000	1.982

Table 10. Results of regression test between relational conflict and change of organizational behavior variable

Dependent variable	Independent variable	Regression coefficient	Meaningful level	Index co-efficient	Frequency	Meaningful level	Durbin-Watson
change of organizational behavior	relational conflict	-0.059	0.535	0.003	0.387	0.535	2.140

H9: Relational conflict significantly influences change of organizational relations of work group.

With regards to statistical results of the following table, it can be claimed that there is no meaningful relation between relational conflict variable and organizational relations variable, because meaningful level (0.378) is more than (0.05). Therefore, there is no linear relation between two variables. On the other hand, the meaningful level (0.535) is more than (0.05) that it's indicated that relational conflict has effect on change of organizational behavior variable (Table 10).

H10: Task conflict significantly influences change of organizational relations of work group.

With regards to statistical results of the following table, it can be claimed that there is meaningful and positive relation between task conflict variable and change of organizational behavior variable (-0.288). Coefficient of this variable is 0.083 that stated 8 percent changes were determined in change of organizational behavior variable via task conflict (Table 11).

Table 11. Results of regression test between task conflict and change of organizational behavior variable

Dependent variable	Independent variable	Regression coefficient	Meaning-ful level	Index co-efficient	Frequency	Meaning-ful level	Durbin-Watson
change of organizational behavior	task conflict	0.288	0.000	0.083	10.022	0.002	1.973

Table 12. Results of regression test between relational conflict and cooperation variable

Dependent variable	Independent variable	Regression coefficient	Meaningful level	Index co-efficient	Frequency	Meaning-ful level	Durbin-Watson
cooperation	relational conflict	-0.033	0.733	0.001	0.118	0.732	2.024

Table 13. Results of regression test between task conflict and cooperation variable

Dependent variable	Independent variable	Regression coefficient	Meaningful level	Index co-efficient	Frequency	Meaningful level	Durbin-Watson
cooperation	task conflict	0.469	0.000	0.220	31.329	0.000	2.126

H11: Relational conflict significantly influences collaboration level of work group members.

With regards to statistical results of the following table, it can be claimed that relational conflict hasn't meaningful effect on cooperation variable, because meaningful level (0.732) is more than (0.05). Therefore, there is no linear relation between two variables. On the other hand, the meaningful level (0.733) is more than (0.05) that it's indicated that relational conflict has effect on cooperation variable (Table 12).

H12: Task conflict significantly influences collaboration level of work group members.

With regards to statistical results of the following table, it can be claimed that task conflict has positive and meaningful effect on cooperation variable

(0.469). Index coefficient of these variables is 0.220 that stated 22 percent changes determined in cooperation variable via task conflict variable (Table 13).

Results summary of the assumptions test are shown in table (14).

Discussion and conclusions

Results and findings of this study about the effect of organizational conflict on task groups indicated that there is reversal relation between relational conflict and avoidance, compromise and relational confidence. But, it hasn't effect on self-devotion, change of organizational relations and cooperation. On the other hand, task conflict has reversal relation

in avoidance, compromise and confidence, but there is direct relation among self-devotion, change of organizational relations and cooperation. Clearly, increasing differences derived from sharp contacts and sever critics and no confidence and contact among persons (relational conflict), group haven't tendency to withdraw and compromise. Also, this conflict cause to be confidence method in low level.

Table 14. Results summary of accepted and unaccepted hypothesis based on meaningful regression coefficient distribution is normal.

	Hypotheses	Regression coefficient	Meaningful level	Test result
H1	Relational conflict has influenced on avoidance	-0.570	0.000	Reversal relation accepted
H2	task conflict has influenced on avoidance	-0.748	0.000	Reversal relation accepted
H3	relational conflict has influenced on compromise	-0.511	0.000	Reversal relation accepted
H4	task conflict has influenced on compromise	-0.645	0.000	Reversal relation accepted
H5	relational conflict has influenced on confidence and respect	-0.549	0.000	Reversal relation accepted
H6	task conflict has influenced on confidence and respect	-0.466	0.000	Reversal relation accepted
H7	relational conflict has influenced on self-devotion	-0.151	0.000	No meaningful relationship
H8	task conflict has influenced on self-devotion	0.352	0.000	Reversal relation accepted
H9	relational conflict has influenced on change of organizational behavior	-0.059	0.000	No meaningful relationship
H10	task conflict has influenced on change of organizational behavior	0.288	0.000	Reversal relation accepted
H11	relational conflict has influenced on cooperation	-0.033	0.000	No meaningful relationship
H12	task conflict has influenced on cooperation	0.469	0.000	Reversal relation accepted

Increasing different ideas about organizational purposes, key decisions and task trends, group have tendency to resolve conflict in free and open environment and they found out a general conclusion by cooperation. They prefer to do self-devotion style, and other theories prefer his/her demands and ideas. Also, these conflicts cause to change organizational relations, in order to reduce conflict.

In summer, it can be concluded that when task conflict emerge, i.e. when there is no agreement in purpose, decisions aspects, performance criteria, resource allocation, rule and methods and trends, style of behavior have tendency to self-devotion, change of organizational relation and cooperation and people prefer to select one of three behaviors.

With regards to above results, there are suggestions about this study by analysis:
• More cohesiveness and unity among group and other parties via common points among them.
• Obtain commitment of group via combination of their demands to get agreement, ignore basic reasons and causes that create contraction.
• Applying experts in human resources and behavioral sciences consultants to solve problems and they could resolve any quarrelsome or discussion in direct and positive way among parties.
• Try to recognize feelings and personality characteristics peoples during employment and put them in groups that they are more cohesive and they have interests and demands closer.
• Using the supporting language and friendly and applying method of consolation and gentle.
• Recognize weakness and stress points of behavioral styles for interested people and applying them in different positions.
• Creating direct relationship between in-

volved parties and emphasize on problem solving.

• Applying job-transfer methods and transferring people in conflict from one section to other section that they could strength their working feelings and improve employers' view.

• Recognize new position and try to direct parties into cooperation and strength common parties among them.

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