

The Relationship between Conflict Handling Styles and Organizational Commitment at Eversafe Extinguisher Sdn. Bhd.

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ABSTRACT

The research was carried out to assess the conflict handling styles among employees at Eversafe Extinguisher Sdn. Bhd, Subang Jaya. The main objective of this study was to identify the mostly common used conflict-handling and its relationship on organizational commitment. This study involved among the employees at Eversafe. Data was analyzed using the Statistics Package for Social Science (SPSS) For Windows Version 22.0. A descriptive and inferential statistics were used in order to assess the conflict handling styles used in the organization. The finding reveals the highest mean score is the integrating style (mean=3.80), followed by compromising style (mean=3.61), obliging style (mean=3.53), and dominating style (mean=3.19) which are moderately practised. The lowest style is avoiding (2.74). In addition, the findings indicated that obliging style and compromising style have positive significant relationship with organizational commitment ($p < 0.05$). The results established that employees are more committed towards the organization by using the obliging and compromising style in resolving conflict. The study suggests that choosing the right style in handling conflict is important in order to maintain the management smooth running of the organization.

Key Words: *Conflict Handling Styles, Dominating, Integrating, Avoiding, Obliging, Compromising and Organizational Commitment*

ABSTRAK

Kajian ini dijalankan untuk mengkaji gaya pengendalian konflik di kalangan pekerja di Eversafe Extinguisher Sdn. Bhd, Subang Jaya. Objektif utama kajian ini adalah untuk mengenal pasti gaya pengendalian konflik yang lazim digunakan dan hubungannya dengan komitmen organisasi. Kajian ini melibatkan para pekerja di Eversafe. Data dianalisis menggunakan Pakej Statistik untuk Sains Sosial (SPSS) Versi Windows 22.0. Statistik deskriptif dan analisis inferensi

digunakan untuk mengukur gaya pengendalian konflik yang digunakan dalam organisasi. Hasil kajian menunjukkan skor min tertinggi adalah gaya integratif (min = 3.80), diikuti dengan gaya berkompromi (min = 3.61), gaya menyesuaikan (min = 3.53) dan gaya menguasai (min = 3.19) pada tahap yang sederhana diamalkan manakala tahap terendah adalah gaya mengelak (min=2.74). Di samping itu, hasil dapatan kajian menunjukkan bahawa terdapat hubungan yang signifikan antara gaya menyesuaikan dan gaya berkompromi dalam pengendalian konflik dengan komitmen organisasi ($p < 0.05$). Hasil dapatan kajian mendapati bahawa pekerja akan lebih komited terhadap organisasi dengan menggunakan gaya menyesuaikan dan secara berkompromi dalam menyelesaikan konflik. Kajian ini mencadangkan penggunaan kaedah gaya menangani konflik secara betul adalah penting bagi mengekalkan kelancaran pengurusan dalam organisasi.

Kata Kunci: *Gaya Pengendalian Konflik, Menguasai, Integratif, Mengelak, Menyesuai, Berkompromi dan Komitmen Organisasi*

INTRODUCTION

Interpersonal conflict is very common to organization and it is inevitable (Ongori, 2009). Interpersonal conflict is an unavoidable phenomenon in any organizations that reduce the mutual understanding and also hinder the commitment of employees to complete their tasks. For an organization to be successful, the employees are required to work in harmony to achieve its goals. Thus, styles and behaviours of employees while dealing with conflict is a critical determinant of the employee's actions toward the achievement of the organizational goals.

A good conflict handling styles is essential in every organization to ensure the effectiveness of the organization continuously. Al-Jawaznen (2015) stated the way of conflict is being handled and carried makes it either boon or bane to organizational commitment. In order to function effectively at any level within organization, conflict handling skills are important prerequisites. Most of the previous researcher discovered that the conflict handling styles used by employees in managing conflicts are integrating, followed by compromising, obliging, avoiding and dominating style (Rahim, 1983).

Glover (2001) says that conflict is often defined by the culture in which we are live. Departmental fire-fighters that are experiencing the problems at work show other signs of conflict such as anger and a lack of patience with other departmental fire. The problem and potential associated conflict are believed to be related to personal aspects of change at the workplace (Monday, 2001). Such firefighters' culture stimulates an environment that makes them display anger towards each other when having a conflict and at the same time argue among each other. Such situations are examples of conflict that appears in organizational personnel. However, when duty calls, no one would know such conflicting period are existent (Monday, 2001). Apart from that, information given to firefighters is frequently limited, erroneous, or conflicting such as firefighters are trained to act quickly to save lives and property that are in imminent danger. The conditions can change drastically during the time it takes fire-fighters to set up their equipment to attack the fire. The abilities and knowledge of information to adapt, improvise, and foresee fire progress are key skills for successful firefighters and fire officers to solve the issues (Occupational safety and Health Administration, 2015). But all of those conflict

that occur among them directly or indirectly could lead to affect their organizational commitment at workplace.

Therefore, this research aims to examine the relationship between conflict handling style and organizational commitment at Eversafe Extinguisher due to lack of study on this areas. Eversafe Extinguisher Sdn. Bhd is a member of Leeden National Oxygen Ltd. which incorporated on 13th December 1979. Its main activity is manufacturing and marketing of firefighting appliances and firefighting system package. Currently, the company is exporting fire-fighting equipment to more than 38 countries worldwide. Today, the company is situated on its own premises of 2.844 acre, housing the manufacturing facilities, marketing, training and research and development departments. The company is placed at Lot 878, Jalan Subang 9, Taman Perindustrian Subang, 47500 Subang Jaya, Selangor Darul Ehsan, Malaysia. Previous studies has been conducted in banking sector (Muhammad Asyraf and Hazril, 2014). However, there were lack of study to indicate how serious are the interpersonal conflict problems among workers and how they handle everyday conflict at the workplace in fire-fighting services sector. This study fills the gap by exploring on other setting area and contribute to expand the literature on examine the relationship between conflict handling styles and organizational commitment as described by Nizam (2011) that the use of integrating style of conflict handling can be strengthened the employees' commitment due to developing understanding between employees and avoiding the conflict issue at workplace.

LITERATURE REVIEW

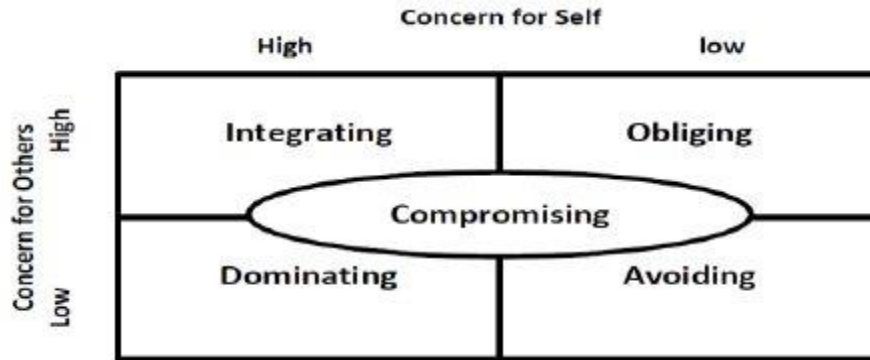
Robbins and Judge (2009) defined conflict as a process that begins where one party perceives that another party has negatively affected, or is about to negatively affects something that the first party cares about (Ebhote & Monday, 2015). Rahim (2011) defined conflict as any incompatibility, disagreement or differences within or between individuals, groups or organization. Whereby according to Folger et al., (2005), conflict is the interaction of interdependent people who perceive incompatibility and the possibility of interference from others as a result of this incompatibility (Boonsathorn, 2007).

Ahmed (2007) stated that there were many types of conflict existed at the workplace. They are classified into interpersonal, intergroup, inter-organizational and international conflict. This paper will only focus interpersonal conflict. Interpersonal conflicts are universal at the workplaces irrespective of their type, size, nature and location. Research showed that interpersonal conflict is very common to organizations (Ongori, 2009). A survey in 9 countries found that almost 85% employees deal with conflict to some extent and 29% are involved in dealing with it most often (Hayes, 2008). Research also revealed that some conflicts generate more negative results than positive which may be due to its nature, size and also how manager deal with it.

Conflict handling styles refer to how we approach to other party in a conflict situation. For effective conflict management in organizations, employees should learn to apply different conflict handling styles in different situations (Abas, 2010). Conflict management requires such skills as effective, communication, problem solving and negotiating with a focus of interest.

Along this research, Conflict handling styles model is used to define a broader context of conflict management styles. Combination of these two dimensions results in five specific styles of handling conflict, as shown in Figure 1 below (Rahim and Bonoma, 1979).

FIGURE 1: Model of Conflict Handling Styles



Source: Rahim and Bonoma (1979)

Based on the above conflict handling styles that adapted from Rahim and Bonoma's (1979) two-dimensional model of five styles of handling conflict, at first the integrating style is known as problem solving, which point out the high concern for self and others in handling conflict to gain an appropriate solution. Thomas et al., (2008) stated that the integrating styles characterized by attempt to satisfy each party's concerns fully by finding a win-win solution (Daly, 2010). As stated by Rahim (2011) in his research, integrating style involves collaboration between the parties that are willingly to reach a mutual and acceptable solution through openness, exchange of information, examination and exploration of differences for arriving to a constructive solution. This style is linked with problem solving and involves openness, sharing information, searching for alternatives and examination of differences to reach an effective solution acceptable to both parties. Individuals with this style face conflict directly and try to find new and creative solutions to problems by focusing on their own needs as well as the needs of others. Most of previous researchers from Lawrence and Lorsch (1967) found that integrating style is more effective than other styles for attaining integration of the activities of different subsystems.

Compromising styles, on the other hand, tend to intermediate in their concerning for self and others. Rahim (2011) in his research found that when both parties involved in give-and take or sharing solutions, both parties agreed to give up something to make mutually acceptable decisions in compromising style. It may involve splitting the difference, exchanging concession, or seeking a quick, middle-ground position. A compromising person or party gives up more than a dominating but less than obliging person or party. Similarly, a compromising person or party are able to manage conflict more openly than an avoiding person or party but does not explore alternative solutions as an integrating person or party. Thomas et al., (2008) stated that compromising styles is characterized by attempting to satisfy each party's concerned partially by finding a middle-ground solution.

Rahim (2011) in his study labelled dominating style as competing which indicates high concern for self and low concern for other. It has been described as a win-lose situation of handling conflict. Dominating person stands up for own rights and ignore others' needs and expectation which try to defend personal positions that he believes being as correct and right. This is a win lose style expression of a forcing behaviour in order to win one's position. Gross and Guerrero (2011) in his study portrayed that dominating style as competing style in which the employees always sticks to their arguments that they are correct and always try to win.

According to Yuan (2007), accommodating style or known as obliging is also linked with low concern for self and high concern for others and associates while attempting to play down the differences and focusing on relationship, cooperation and harmony. As suggested by Rahim (2011) in his study, obliging styles may take the form of selfless generosity, charity, or obedience to the party's order. The individual of this style can be called as "conflict absorber" terms describing a reaction of low hostility or even friendliness to a perceived hostile act.

Avoiding style indicates low concern for self and low concern for others in handling conflict which known as suppression. Avoiding persons tend to have a little concern for either one's own or other's interest. Thus, they fail to satisfy personal concern as well as the concern of other party. This style associated with a tendency for people, or group in conflict to withdraw from the conflict situation or remain neutral. Rahim (2011) on his study stated that it was related to withdrawal, buck-passing, sidestepping situation. According to Lussier (2010), avoidance is neither being assertive nor co-operative and is commonly used by people who are emotionally upset by the tensions and frustrations of conflict.

METHODOLOGY

The data collected in this study is assessed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences version 20. This study was conducted at the Eversafe Extinguisher Sdn.Bhd, Subang Jaya. The scope of the study focuses on workers who are in the operation department since they often deal with people who are going to cause conflict. There are about 40 employees in the department. Researchers distributed questionnaires to employees who works at the operation department. The study was carried out on an area of office environments where respondents were randomly selected. The population of this study is to involve employees in the operation department at Eversafe Extinguisher Sdn. Bhd. A total of 40 employees as population in this department are considered by the Head of Human Resources at Eversafe Extinguisher Sdn. Bhd. Therefore, a total of 36 questionnaires were distributed as sample of this study among the employees. The number of samples to be taken based on the estimated number of population as described by Krejcie and Morgan (1970). The data were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics via pearson correlation analysis (Pallant, 2011).

Reliability test, descriptive analysis using mean scores are used in order to identify the most common styles used in conflict handling at Eversafe. Likert-style approach is adopted in the questionnaires. Items were scored as follows: 5 for very agree, 4 for agree, 3 for moderate, 2 for disagree, and 1 for very disagree. Instruments in this study were categorized into three parts

which is demographic factor, independent variables (conflict handling styles) and dependent variables (organizational commitment).

Research Instrument

Conflict management styles were measured adapted by Rahim (1983). This multi-item instrument contains 28 items uses a 5-point Likert scale to assess employee's style of handling conflict. Specifically 7 items for measuring integrating style, 6 items each for measuring obligating style and 6 items for avoiding styles, 4 items for measuring compromising style and 5 items for measuring dominating style. While, the Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ) items was developed by Mowday, Steers, and Porter (1979). This study used the 8-items version of the OCQ. The items used 5-point Likert scale (strongly disagree to strongly agree) to examine the relationship between conflict handling styles and organizational commitment.

ANALYSIS

Reliability Analysis on Research Instrument

TABLE 1: Reliability Assessment Instruments

Range	Reliability
0.96 - 1.00	Very Satisfied
0.80 - 0.95	Highly Satisfied
0.65 - 0.79	Satisfied
0.50 - 0.64	Low and Less Satisfied
Below 0.50	Very low and not satisfied

Source: Piaw, C.Y (2006), Basic Statistics Research

TABLE 2: Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Test

Variables	Number (Question)	Reliability	
		(Pilot Test)	(Actual Test)
		(30 respondent)	(36 respondent)
Dependent Variable:			
Organizational Commitment (DV)	8	0.756	0.776
Independent Variables:			
Integrating Style (IV)	7	0.940	0.929
Obliging Style (IV)	6	0.902	0.895
Compromising Style (IV)	4	0.717	0.725
Dominating Style (IV)	5	0.812	0.791
Avoiding Style (IV)	6	0.804	0.783

Based on Table 2, the value of Cronbach's Alpha for pilot studies to be at a satisfied level. The reliability of the dependent and independent variables are above the 0.7 value range. This means that the respondent understands each question in the questionnaire properly since all reliability value ranged at satisfied and highly satisfied. Range value for the dependent variable, organizational commitment is 0.756, while the reliability of the independent variables for

integrating style is 0.940, obliging style 0.902, compromising style 0.717, dominating style .0.812 and 0.804 for avoiding styles. The value of Cronbach alpha (actual test) on organizational commitment is 0.776, while the reliability of the independent variables for integrating style is 0.929, obliging style 0.895, compromising style 0.725, dominating style 0.791 and 0.783 for avoiding styles. The value of reliability on actual test showed that the questions are all reliable.

TABLE 3: Demographic Analysis

Categories of Demographic Respondent	Frequency (<i>f</i>)	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Female	19	52.8
Male	17	47.2
Total :	36	100.0
Age		
20 – 30 years	14	38.9
31 – 40 years	17	47.2
41 – 50 years	4	11.1
More than 50 years	1	2.8
Total :	36	100.0
Academic of Qualification		
Certificate	16	44.4
Diploma	8	22.2
Bachelor	12	33.3
Total :	36	100.0
Length of service		
Less than one year	6	16.7
1 – 4 years	12	33.3
5 – 9 years	15	41.7
10 years and above	3	8.3
Total :	36	100.0
Level of Management		
Lower management	19	52.8
Middle management	17	47.2
Total :	36	100.0

The mean score explains the tendency of each dependent variable and independent variables. The table below shows the classification analysis for the mean and the assessment level.

TABLE 4: Analysis Classification of Score Mean

Classification Mean Score	Level of Score
1.00 – 1.79	Very Low
1.80 – 2.59	Low

2.60 – 3.39	Moderate
3.40 – 4.19	High
4.20 – 5.00	Very high

TABLE 5: Mean Score of Variables

Variables	Total Question	Mean	Level
Dependent variables :			
Organizational Commitment	8	3.28	Moderate
Independent Variable			
Integrating Style	7	3.80	High
Obliging Style	6	3.53	High
Compromising Style	4	3.61	High
Dominating Style	5	3.19	Moderate
Avoiding Style	6	2.74	Moderate
TOTAL	47	3.37	Moderate

The result from this study revealed employees at Eversafe Extinguisher Sdn. Bhd tends to used integrating style at most in managing conflict at workplace. This is proven based on the mean score of the data in Table 5. Integrating style ranked the highest mean value with score 3.80. Compromising style with mean score 3.61 served as secondly preferred and obliging style ranked as third preferred style with the mean score of 3.53. The dominating style ranked fourth in the preferred style with mean score 3.19. The least preferred style indicated avoiding style as the mean score is the lowest among others styles with score 2.74. The descriptive analysis of this part reveals that the employees frequently used the integrating, compromising and obliging styles while rarely used the dominating and avoiding styles in handling the conflict. The finding of this study is supported by the previous research conducted by Enver et al., (2009) which stated integrating style as the most desired one because it is most likely to yield a win-win solution. Integrating, compromising, and obliging style are highly practiced among employees at Eversafe Extinguisher Sdn. Bhd since it concerns about others in solving a conflict while dominating and avoiding is moderately practiced.

Analysis of Inferential Statistics based on Pearson correlation

TABLE 6: Data Pearson Correlation between the Independent Variables and Dependent Variable

Variables	No. Questions	Pearson Correlation	Significant Value
Integrating style	7	.87	.615

Obliging style	6	.628**	.000
Compromising style	4	.600**	.000
Dominating style	5	.287	.090
Avoiding style	6	.141	.411

The findings depict the summary the relationship between the conflict handling styles and organizational commitment. The hypothesis of this study to examine is there any significant relationship between integrating style, obliging style, compromising style, dominating style and avoiding style of conflict handling styles (IV) towards organizational commitment (DV). Pearson correlation analysis was used to find the relationship between the independent variable and dependent variable above. This study used the Pearson correlation analysis in order to determine the relationship between both variables as described by Pallant (2011).

The findings indicated that the first hypothesis there is no significant relationship between integrating style ($r=.87$, $p=.615$) and organizational commitment. It shows that the alternative hypothesis is rejected in this study since the result shows since the P-value is ($p > 0.05$). It indicates that by using integrating style in handling conflict are not able to influence the organizational commitment. Nizam (2011) states that commitment among employees can be strengthened by using integrating style because it would able to increase understanding between employees. However, the result shows differ since the integrating style is found not correlated with the organizational commitment.

Second, the findings reveals that there is positive significant relationship between obliging style ($r=.628$, $p<0.05$) towards organizational commitment. The alternative hypothesis is accepted in this study since the result show significant relationship since the P-value is ($p = 0.000 < 0.01$). It was proves that by using obliging style of conflict handling are able to influence the organizational commitment. The relationship indicated that the higher the use of obliging style in handling conflict, the higher the organizational commitment of employees can be achieved. Thus, this result shows that the obliging styles can boost employees' commitment since they concern others in making decision for the conflict. Rahim (2011) stated in his study that obliging person neglects and sacrifices personal concern to satisfy the concern of the other party. This finding is supported by previous research conducted by Muhammad Asyraf and Hazril (2014) and Aljawazneh (2015) which showed on his study that the obliging style of managing conflict showed positive relationships and highly correlated with employees' commitment towards organization.

Third findings of hypothesis shows that there is positive significant relationship between compromising style ($r=.600$, $p<0.05$) towards organizational commitment. The result is supported by previous research conducted by Muhammad Asyraf and Hazril (2014), Wanyonyi et al., (2015), Aljawazneh (2015) and Abdul Fattah et al., (2017) found that the compromising style of managing conflict portrayed positive significant relationships and highly correlated with employees' commitment towards organization. Dobkin & Pace (2006) state that compromising style can boost commitment among employees as it encourages the employees to work together to manage conflict among them.

On top of that, there is an inverse findings that there are no significant relationship between dominating style ($r=.287$, $p=.090$) and avoiding style ($r=.141$, $p=.411$) of conflict handling towards organizational commitment. It indicates that by using dominating style and avoiding style in handling conflict are not able to effect the organizational commitment. There is no effective if the management use both this styles to cultivate their employees' commitment in organization. The result of this study are in line with previous research conducted by Mehr et al., (2017) in their study that there are no significant correlation between dominating style and avoiding style in handling the conflict and its effectiveness. In addition, this is supported by Wanyonyi et al., (2015) found that there was no significant relationship between avoiding style and organizational commitment. This study also in line with Montoya Weiss, et al., (2001) found out that by using avoiding style of conflict handling it will hurt relationship in a team. People usually let the conflict be lessened while time goes on. In fact, avoiding the problems does not make it go away but make it more worst.

To sum up, the above results indicated that there are no significant relationship between integrating style ($r=.087$, $p=.615$) dominating style ($r=.287$, $p=.090$) and avoiding style ($r=.141$, $p=.411$) of conflict handling towards organizational commitment. Therefore, it can be described there are no significant correlation between integrating, dominating and avoiding style of conflict handling on organizational commitment ($p>0.05$). However, the finding reveals that there are positive significant relationship between obliging style ($r=.628$, $p<0.05$) and compromising style ($r=.600$, $p<0.05$) towards organizational commitment. It shows that employees are more committed towards the organization by using the obliging and compromising style in resolving conflict.

Thus, the organization is able to know the relationship between each conflict handling styles in order to produce high value effort of commitment to perform successfully in organization. The findings of this study is important for the organization in order to maintain and ensure the quality of organizational commitment of employees in future. Therefore, the organization can draft an appropriate planning for improvement in future, enhancing the organizational performance and organizational commitment at workplace.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The conflict handling styles is seen one of the factor that influences organizational commitment. There are five styles that have been tested in this study which are integrating, obliging, compromising, dominating and avoiding style of conflict handling. The first finding of research conducted indicated that the employees tend to use integrating style at most in managing conflict. This is followed by the compromising style, obliging style, dominating style and lastly avoiding style as the least practiced. By referring the mean score, integrating, obliging and compromising styles are interpreting as a highly practiced style by employees while dominating and avoiding styles are moderately practiced.

The next finding reveals that there are positive significant relationship between obliging style and compromising style of conflict handling styles towards organizational commitment.

Thus, this clearly shows that obliging and compromising style influence the organizational commitment. The higher the use of obliging and compromising style in managing conflict, the higher the organizational commitment can be achieved. However, both obliging and compromising have a moderate level of correlation. Thus, the management must aware with this finding and exposes a right conflict management styles in managing conflict towards their employees to boost up the organizational commitment and performance.

This study has certain limitations particularly in regards to generalization as the sample of study only focusing on small scales which is cannot be generalised to other context. Future research could be conducted in other settings area of job scope to address the issues of understanding the approaches of conflict handling styles in workplace. In addition, future research can be carried out to expand the research by testing to larger sample and various company in order to know broaden perspective. More research needs to be done in this area in order to expand the theory of conflict handling style and it consequence towards organizational commitment.

The implication of this study proposes there is the urgency to assess and understand conflict management styles among the employees. The management of organization needs to conduct a program or workshop that relate with managing conflict handling styles in order for employees to learn in managing and dealing with the nature of conflict that might occur in workplace. Thus, the management must provide awareness of conflict handling styles in managing conflict to overcome the problem. Disagreement can be solved by having a right and appropriate conflict handling styles.

Hence, it is essential for the management of organization to provide awareness and courses that relate with dealing in conflict handling styles towards their employees so that they are applicable to manage the disagreement occur in the organization. Apart from that, in order to maintain harmony between all level management and among the employees, top management should provide more training for their employees to handle conflict at work and how to enhance employees' understanding and awareness on problematic situation.

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