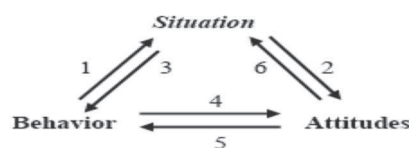

CONFLICTS ARE DISAGREEMENTS THAT LEAD TO TENSION WITHIN, AND BETWEEN, PEOPLE

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Abstract: In order to remain competitive in their respective markets companies around the world are expanding their horizons beyond their original country, and they are increasingly seeking international partnerships and business ventures in different cultural environments. The ability to negotiate across national borders and within the organization has become increasingly important in the past decade, but despite the continuous growth of business globalization negotiation and conflict resolution styles are often misunderstood. According to much of the literature available scholars have conducted substantial research on the subjects of negotiation and conflict resolution over the past years, including some cross-cultural research comparing negotiation styles indifferent cultural contexts (Graham, 1993). However, there is a general agreement on the fact that not much research related to intercultural negotiations and conflict resolution has been conducted yet (Leung, 1997). In this study I focus on the influence of individualism and collectivism on negotiation behavior and conflict resolution style.

Introduction : The purpose of this research is not to determine how great the cultural differences between the American and Ethiopian managers are, but rather whether these cultural differences may have an impact on the negotiation and conflict resolution style adopted. Also, the relationship between cultural differences and negotiation outcome is beyond the scope of this study. The perception of threat, or actual occurrence of conflict, is necessary for the initiation of conflict prevention or management measures, and hence it is essential to address the concept of conflict before exploring how to prevent and manage such occurrences. The first step is to understand what a conflict is made up by exactly. The starting point for this paper is the traditional definitions of conflicts (presented below), according to which a conflict is the result of opposing interests involving scarce resources, goal divergence and frustration. The paper then addresses more recent perceptions of the conflict concept. We suggest that conflicts should not be defined simply in terms of violence (behavior) or hostility (attitudes), but also include incompatibility or “differences in issue position” (Position difference) such a definition is designed to include conflicts outside the traditional military sphere and is based on behavioral dimensions. According to Mitchell, the conflict structure consists of three parts: attitudes, behavior and situations that interact and create conflicts between actors. Mitchell’s conflict structure simplifies the complex reality in an understandable way (Model 1). The model was created for political and military conflicts, but is also applicable to the changes in perception of conflicts that the international community has experienced- economic, environmental and human security have become fundamental aspects of international and regional interaction. Mitchell’s model is

able to incorporate this. However, this model is complicated by the fact that conflicts often occur in mixed-motive relationships where the involved parties both have cooperative and competitive goals and Mitchell's model seems to have neglected this pluralistic/multifaceted/more complex dimension to the relationship. The competitive element creates conflict and the cooperative element creates incentives to negotiate an agreement. There are, however, studies that confirm that conflicts tend to occur even when the involved parties have highly compatible goals. This can be explained by including frustration, obstruction, and interference in the definition. The theoretical framework presented here has been adjusted to leave room for an interpretation of conflict which includes tensions, misunderstandings, political and economic interests, and historical animosity. A conflict has generally been defined as a situation in which two or more parties strive to acquire the same scarce resources at the same time. Scholars generally agree that there needs to be more than one part to have a conflict, and that the time factor is important. What does cause concern is the term scarce resource. The central point in this argument is scarcity, but resources need also be included in the discussion. Peter Wallenstein has pointed out that resources are not only economic in nature, and that the terminology might miss conflicts involving economic orientation, human security, environment, historical issues, etc. Such conflicts are not necessarily about resources, and when they are, these resources are, more importantly, not necessarily scarce. Model 1: Mitchell's



Conflict Model

The situation impacts the behavior (failure to reach targeted goals, especially important goals, creates frustration and increases the willingness to reach these goals). The situation impacts attitudes (incompatible goals increase the suspicion and distrust between the actors). Behavior impacts the situation (success can introduce new questions in the conflict as demands increase). Behavior impacts the attitudes (destruction increases hatred, success can impact the group solidarity and the notion of "us"). Attitudes impact the behavior (expectations such as "our traditional enemies will attack again" will impact the defensive planning and preventive actions). Attitudes impact the situation (the longer the conflict continues the more questions will be introduced)

Conflict Resolution: It is conceptualized as the methods and processes involved in facilitating the peaceful ending of conflict. Often, committed group members attempt to resolve group conflicts by actively communicating information about their conflicting motives or ideologies to the rest of the group (e.g., intentions;

reasons for holding certain beliefs), and by engaging in collective negotiation. Ultimately, a wide range of methods and procedures for addressing conflict exist, including but not limited to, negotiation, mediation, diplomacy, and creative peace building.

Review of Literature: Kapusuzoglu (2010), examine the impact of Conflict Resolution Education (Peer Mediation) in schools on the behaviors of students. The data of this research was collected through two types of Questionnaires, the first type of questionnaire applied to peer mediation service provider students, aimed to determine the impact of the training and the second type of questionnaire applied to service user students were related to the effects and contributions of service provider friends and the application on their attitudes and skills. The findings obtains that peer mediation application has created a positive school / classroom climate and supported the school system. Similarly, the findings of this research have shown that personal perceptions and emphatic skills of the service provider students have been developed much more through this application. Gent and Shannon (2009), have explore the bias of third parties and the techniques they employ in the management of river, maritime, and territorial claims. To test they examine the relationship between bias and the type of conflict management strategy pursued by third party states in international territorial, maritime, and river claims. They found that unbiased third parties are better at brokering agreements and ending disputes. The findings indicate that the conflict management technique is more influential than third party characteristics in determining successful conflict resolution. Gerhard (2009) identifies various strand of the EU's conflict management capability effected through different, and sometimes conflicting channels of institutional action. The study shows that the institutional interfaces crucial to internal coherence and coordinateness in order to then investigate the quality of functional overlap that needs to be tackled in each case. Zhenzhong Ma (2007) identified how Chinese people conflicts and their preferred conflict management styles affect their negotiation behavior and outcomes in business negotiation. This study used 3 different negotiation simulations to investigate the nature of conflict styles in China and to explore the effects of different styles on negotiation process and outcomes. The conflict styles were measured with the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (1974), and negotiation process and outcomes were assessed by a variety of methods. The original questionnaires and negotiation cases used were developed in English. Translation and back-translation procedures were followed to ensure the equivalence for all the questions and the cases used in the simulations (Brisling, 1986). The results of this study provide strong support for the notion that collectivist Chinese tend to use non-confrontational style to resolve conflicts. Specifically, Chinese people are more likely to use compromising as a way to handle conflicts. Competing, instead of accommodating, is found to be the second preferred style in China. The results also question the relationship between conflict styles and negotiation process and outcomes in China, for which no significant impact of different conflict preferences is found in this study. Ramarajan et.al (2004) investigated the tests of factors that could promote

essential cooperation between peacekeepers and NGO workers intervening in ethno political conflict and found that the outcome of interaction between peacekeepers and NGO workers is conflict rather than cooperation. Second, this study shows that conflict between peacekeepers and NGO workers, rather than being managed successfully at the individual level, can be mis-managed: conflict management styles that may prevail in conflict situations can have dysfunctional results (e.g., avoidance). However, the conflict management styles that has potential negative effects on interpersonal interaction (e.g., dominating) can also be improved through organizationally-sponsored training, as found in this study. Cetin et.al, (2004) identified that to what extent and how conflict management styles differ in educational atmosphere by investigating academics' and high school teachers' conflict management styles. A series of works have been undertaken in order to collect data for the research. The results of this study indicate that demographic differences (experience, age, gender and subject) affect teachers' and academics' conflict management styles. Analysis revealed that academics' conflict management styles change related to academics' faculties. Academics in the faculty of education were regarded to be using accommodation and collaboration style more when compared to academics in faculty of business administration. Academics within the range of 11-20 years of experience group found to be choosing compromising approach more in contrast to academics within the range of 1-5 years and 21 and above years of experience. Brew and Cairns (2004) believe that choice of conflict style is closely associated with face-negotiation needs which vary across cultures. The study investigates differences in conflict management styles according to type of face-concern and status between individualists and collectivists in an Australian setting specific to Anglos and Chinese. The analysis is based on different conditions. Overall, Anglos favored more direct communication than did Chinese in conflict situations involving face-threat, but type of face concern showed a higher effect-size than did culture, with both groups favoring more direct communication when self-face was threatened compared to other face. For Anglos, two different styles of conflict management, results-oriented (direct) and solution-oriented (diplomatic), emerged particularly in superior condition where a specific preference for an indirect style unexpectedly emerged, whereas for Chinese, two different styles of conflict management, passive (indirect) and solution-oriented (direct), also emerged. Passive was the dominant style of the two and was mainly related to cautious communication styles for other-face threat in all status conditions. Solution-oriented was mainly related to direct communication styles for all status conditions and both types of face-threat, but to cautious communication in the superior condition for other-face threat.

Conflict Resolution: Resolving Conflict rationally and effectively: In many cases, conflict seems to be a fact of life. We've all seen situations where different people with different goals and needs have come into conflict. And we've all seen the often-intense personal animosity that can result. The fact that conflict exists, however, is not necessarily a bad thing: As long as it is resolved effectively, it can lead to personal and professional growth. In many cases, effective conflict

resolution skills can make the difference between positive and negative outcomes. The good news is that by resolving conflict successfully, you can solve many of the problems that it has brought to the surface, as well as getting benefits that you might not at first expect:

Increased understanding: The discussion needed to resolve conflict expands people's awareness of the situation, giving them an insight into how they can achieve their own goals without undermining those of other people

Increased group cohesion : When conflict is resolved effectively, team members can develop stronger mutual respect, and a renewed faith in their ability to work together; and

Improved self-knowledge: Conflict pushes individuals to examine their goals in close detail, helping them understand the things that are most important to them, sharpening their focus, and enhancing their effectiveness. However, if conflict is not handled effectively, the results can be damaging. Conflicting goals can quickly turn into personal dislike. Teamwork breaks down. Talent is wasted as people disengage from their work. And it's easy to end up in a vicious downward spiral of negativity and recrimination.

It helps to understand two of the theories that lie behind effective conflict resolution techniques:

Understanding the Theory: Conflict Styles In the 1970s Kenneth Thomas and Ralph Kilmann identified 5 main styles of dealing with conflict that vary in their degrees of cooperativeness and assertiveness. They argued that people typically have a preferred conflict resolution style. However they also noted that different styles were most useful in different situations.

The 5 main styles of dealing with conflict are:

Competitive: People who tend towards a competitive style take a firm stand, and know what they want. They usually operate from a position of power, drawn from things like position, rank, expertise, or persuasive ability. This style can be useful when there is an emergency and a decision needs to be made; when the decision is unpopular; or when defending against someone who is trying to exploit the situation selfishly. However it can leave people feeling bruised, unsatisfied and resentful when used in less urgent situations.

Collaborative: People tending towards a collaborative style try to meet the needs of all people involved. These people can be highly assertive but unlike the competitor, they cooperate effectively and acknowledge that everyone is important. This style is useful when you need to bring together a variety of viewpoints to get the best solution; when there have been previous conflicts in the group; or when the situation is too important for a simple trade-off.

Compromising: People who prefer a compromising style try to find a solution that will at least partially satisfy everyone. Everyone is expected to give up something and the compromiser him- or she also expects to relinquish something. Compromise is useful when the cost of conflict is higher than the cost of losing ground, when equal strength opponents are at a standstill and when there is a deadline looming.

Accommodating: This style indicates a willingness to meet the needs of others at

the expense of the person's own needs. The accommodator often knows when to give in to others, but can be persuaded to surrender a position even when it is not warranted. This person is not assertive but is highly cooperative. Accommodation is appropriate when the issues matter more to the other party, when peace is more valuable than winning, or when you want to be in a position to collect on this "favor" you gave. However people may not return favors, and overall this approach is unlikely to give the best outcomes. Avoiding: People tending towards this style seek to evade the conflict entirely. This style is typified by delegating controversial decisions, accepting default decisions, and not wanting to hurt anyone's feelings. It can be appropriate when victory is impossible, when the controversy is trivial, or when someone else is in a better position to solve the problem. However in many situations this is a weak and ineffective approach to take. Conflicts do not have a life of their own. Conflicts are the result of how people interact and the issues they disagree on. There are various ways or methods for meeting or engaging conflicts. These methods and ways are influenced, among other things by your understanding of conflicts in general. Flight-Fight-Openness. In general one can identify three strategies when dealing with conflicts. Flight – this strategy can manifest itself in many ways among which are to be evasive, ignore the issue, denial or to belittle the problem. One can physically or emotionally run away and terminate contact with the person one is in conflict with. Fight – manifestation of this strategy includes; retaliation, sarcasm, physical or psychological violence, condescending or patronizing behavior. Openness – recognizing that there is a conflict and that you are a part of it, being inquisitive, have the courage to maintain contact and being curious and engaging in dialogue. These different reactions are not comparable to moral guidelines where one is more correct than the other. There are undoubtedly situations where each of the options or reactions is sensible and relevant. Experience, however, has shown that, when possible, openness is preferable. Groups in Conflict When dealing with conflicts in a group setting it can be valuable to perform a flow-analysis. The flow-analysis views the group being analyzed as an organism, where each individual is interconnected to the next. The result of the analysis is not directed at any one individual but at the group as a whole. To perform a flow-analysis seat the group you wish to analyze in a circle and ask each member of the group, one by one, three questions: 1. How do you disrupt the flow of this group? 2. Why do you do this? 3. What do you need in order to be willing to change your strategy? The various answers to these questions are written on a piece of paper and checked for accuracy with the respondent. After everyone has responded to the first question, the next round commences and so forth. After the three rounds the group is divided into three, one group per question. Each group must then condense the answers to their particular question into as few sentences as possible, without loss of meaning. The result of this process is how, the group as an organism, believes flow is stopped, why it is stopped and what needs to be done in order to prevent it from being stopped. The process is conducted in complete openness.

Conclusion: Conflict is not in itself a bad thing. There are many reasons why it is a necessary part of the growth and development of individuals, families,

communities, and societies. Conflict can help build community, define and balance people's needs as individuals with their needs as participants in larger systems, and help them face and address in a clear and conscious way the many difficult choices that life brings to them. Working through a conflict can be an important bonding and growth producing experience. The strength of social systems lies in part in how they prevent serious conflicts and, when conflicts do arise, how they address them so as to maintain system integrity and preserve the wellbeing of their members. By facing major conflicts, addressing them, reorganizing as necessary to deal with them, and moving on, social organizations adapt to changes in their environment. Understanding the dynamics of conflict therefore provides conflict resolvers and related professionals with a basic tool for addressing the essential forces that shape the development of individuals and social entities. Turning your back on difficult employees isn't just a management mistake—it can also create legal trouble. That's because employees who frequently bump heads with management are also the ones most likely to file lawsuits when they feel they're being treated unfairly. That's why, when confronted with employees who don't do what's asked, it's best to devise a strategy for making the best of a potentially explosive situation. Although it may be hard to transform a difficult employee into a warm, friendly ally, there are several steps you can take to make it easier for the employee to comply.

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