

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE AND CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STYLES: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to determine the psychological safety as a mediator among organizational culture and conflict management styles (collaborating, avoiding, compromising, and accommodating). Data was gathered from private banks of Pakistan about 295 filled questionnaires were received. The mediation analysis of was used to test the hypotheses. The findings show that psychological safety act as a mediator among organizational culture and conflict management styles (collaborating, avoiding, compromising, and accommodating). Implications are also discussed.

Keywords: Organizational culture, Conflict management styles (collaborating, avoiding, compromising and accommodating).

INTRODUCTION

The study of (Janićijević, 2013) found that the culture of organization influences the design and implementation of organizational structure. Organizational culture creates attitudes, assumptions, norms, values, and frame of reference that are used by those individuals who made the organizational structure. The cultural context facilitates the implementation of targeted organizational structure. Organizational culture legitimizes the decisions and behaviors imposed on management and employees by organizational structure inside the context of valid norms and values of behavior. On the other side, organizational structure institutionalizes the organizational culture such as attitudes, norms and values. Hence, organizational structure can change or strengthen the present organizational culture. Thus, the association of organizational structure and culture is twofold (Janićijević, 2013). Several studied has reported that organizational culture impacts the conflict management styles such as collaboration, compromise, accommodation, avoidance, and domination style (Mehr, 2012; Mohammed, 2008; Di Pietro, & Di Virgilio, 2013). We can say that organizational structure and self-construal shape the conflict management styles of an individual and it is influenced by culture of an organization. The study of Huang, (Chang, & Wu, 2017) demonstrate that supportive organizational culture can help the organizational members to have a trust among them. Innovative organization culture also required

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good interaction among members that promote mutual trust and psychological support in the form of security, encouragement, self-efficacy, and affirmation which relieves the psychological stress occurred due to failure in innovation process (Woodman, 1993; Scott et al., 1994). Moreover, the theory of social exchange indicates that mutual trust, mutual benefit, mutual assistance, and information sharing of individuals have positive influence on behaviors and attitudes of individuals (Seers, 1989). In this regards, on the base of face negotiation theory, it is explained that a person who are more concerned about others rather than self-face, go for collaborating, avoiding, compromising, and accommodating conflict management styles (Oetzel, Meares, Myers, & Lara, 2003; Oetzel, & Ting-Toomey, 2003). On the other hand, organizational cultures such as supportive and innovative improve the psychological safety of employees by building mutual trust and respect among them and followed collaborating, avoiding, compromising, and obliging conflict management styles in case of conflict. Therefore, the objective of this study is to test the psychological safety as a mediator among organizational culture and conflict management styles (collaborating, avoiding, compromising, and accommodating).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Organizational culture and conflict management styles

On the basis of cognitive anthropology, culture is defined as an ethno science (Goodenough, 1971), culture is also referred as a system of beliefs and knowledge or shared cognitions system (Rashid, 2003; Rossi & O'Higgins, 1980). Organizational culture is a unique system for arranging material phenomena, emotions, behaviors, things, and events (Rossi & O'Higgins, 1980). A cognitive perspective of culture is increasingly important in an organizational study (Wacker, 1981; Harris & Cronen, 1979; Bougon, 1983). The cognitive views force scholars to consider the culture as a subjective meanings or reference frames that organizational members shared in various degree levels as an external observer, grammar like manner or appear to function in a rule. Few study efforts reported how organizational members considered themselves as collective. Often, they diagnosis the degree to which employees are shared themselves for a conflict or action (Wacker, 1981). In this context, usually culture is defined as normative or social glue that together the organizational members (Tichy, 1982). It gives importance to what is an organization instead of what an organization has, reflect the values inside the corporate society, and highlight context in which corporate society has significance. It states the social ideals or values and beliefs that organizational members are willing to share (Smircich, 1983; Siehl & Martin, 1981). These patterns of belief or values are manifested through symbolic devices such as specialized language (Andrews & Hirsch, 1983), myths (Boje, 1982), stories (Mitroff & Kilmann, 1976), rituals (Deal & Kennedy, 1982) and legends (Wilkins & Martin, 1980). According to Schein (1992), culture is defined as a shared pattern related to basic assumptions that group of peoples are interested to solve the external adaptation problems and internal integration is worked well and taken as valid, thus new members are taught in a correct way to think, perceive, and have a relation with those problems. Therefore, organizational culture is socially constructed, shared and transmitted around the organizational generations and consisted of multiple layers (Schein, 1992, 2000; Hofstede et al., 1990; Rowlinson & Proctor, 1999; Mohan, 1993; Ostroff et al., 2003). It is severed as a powerful

social control function, controls the acceptable behavior range, and thus, limits the difference of individuals in organizations (O'Reilly, & Chatman, 1996).

Additionally, organizational development literature (Bate et al., 2000; Argyres, & Silverman, 2004) indicates that culture notion is an internal organizational variable explained as shared key beliefs and values to achieve many essential functions. Firstly, it showed the sense of identity among members of organization (Deal & Kennedy, 1982). Secondly, it improves the commitment level in a large intensity (Siehl & Martin, 1981). Thirdly, culture develops stability of social system (Kreps, 1981). Lastly, culture act as device of sense making that can shape and guide behavior (Siehl & Martin, 1981; Pfeffer, 1981). These characteristics of organizational culture are a key for strategic managers that can direct and influence the organization (Tichy, 1982). In this study, organizational culture is taken as a degree, to which social interaction is presented inside the organization, as a result organizational identity is generated and it describes the ways how events of organizations are interpreted by individuals as well as understand other's actions and own (Helms & Stern, 2001). Behavioral patterns assumptions effects and continue to impact the behaviors, due to persistently guided employees to make decisions that traditionally worked for an organization (Sweeney & Hardaker, 1994; Ott, 1989). Organizational culture influences the way of peoples through which they subconsciously, consciously, and ultimately make decisions, feel, perceive, and act on threats and opportunities presented by external and internal environments that can comprise conflict (Sweeney & Hardaker, 1994). Scholars have increased their understanding regarding what is happening in an organization with the help of various theories that is attempted to predict and explain how organizational contexts responded in different types of circumstances (Ott, 1989). This aspect was generated on the response of scholar's feelings those believed that more systematic, conventional and structural organizations did not contain a human factor that considered a life in organizations. The perspective of organizational culture recommends that personal preferences of employees are not restricted through systems of norms, authority, formal rules, unlike the systems and structural aspects of organizational theory. Regardless, they are managed by assumptions, cultural norms, beliefs, perceptions, values, and artifacts (Schein, 2000; Ott, 1989; O'Reilly et al., 1991). Additionally, organizational culture is categorized by several researchers (Quinn & Cameron, 1983; Goffee & Jones, 1998; Wallach, 1983). In this study, organizational culture is divided into three types; supportive, innovative, and bureaucratic (Wallach, 1983). A bureaucratic culture is compartmentalized and hierarchical. Employees have clear lines of authority and responsibility. Work is systematic and organized, and usually this type of culture is based on power and control. This type of organization has characteristics of cautious, stable, hierarchical, procedural, mature, structured, regulated, regulated, ordered, solid, established, and power-oriented. An innovative culture is referred to risk-taking, creative, results-oriented, stimulating, challenging work environment, ambitious, and entrepreneurial. A supportive culture is exhibited trusting work environment, encouraging, people-oriented, open, collaborative, harmonious, relationships oriented, safe, sociable, and equitable (Wallach, 1983).

Conflicts can be occurred at different level from personal to societal. In each conflict level, culture influence how employees would perceived the conflict situation and what is the favorable way through which a person manage the consequent negotiation or social interaction (Chan, 2010). The success of conflict resolution is dependent on well managed interaction handling methods considered

Akif

by conflicting parties. Interpersonal conflict has two types such as concern for others and concern for self (Rahim & Bonoma, 1979; Follett, 1940; Thomas, 1976; Blake & Mouton, 1964). First type defines that the extent to which a person wants to satisfy own concern. Second type defines that the extent to which a person wants to satisfy other's concern. These two concerns are the part of Dual Concerns model (Rubin, Pruitt & Kim, 1994). Furthermore, personal level concern is classified into association in resolving conflicts and personal goals in a project environment (Groton, 1997; Moore, 1996). Conflicts can be handled with five approaches (Rahim, 1983; Rahim, Antonioni & Psenicka, 2001). Collaborating (high concern for both relationships and personal goals) approach consisted of information exchange, openness and examined difference to get an effective solution that is acceptable in both sides. It is linked with problem solving that move towards win-win solutions. Dominating (high personal concern but lower relationship concern) approach leads to win-lose intention by forcing behavior to win the position. Compromising (moderate concern for relationships and personal goals) approach includes give and take of both parties to give up something and make a mutual acceptable decision. Avoiding (low concern for both relationships and personal goals) approach is involved to continue the problems and linked with buck-passing, withdrawal or sidestepped actions to reach a no-deal solution. Accommodating (high concerned with others and low concerned with personal goals) approach is related with playing with differences and give importance to commonalities with yielding attitude to make other's happy. Five conflict approaches are identified in the reference of behavioral attitude for resolving a conflict. These types of strategic attitudes are referred to a person's intention for conflicts: yielding, problem-solving, holding, forcing, and breaking-even (Tsai & Chi, 2009).

Additionally, face negotiation theory is developed by Ting-Toomey's (1988) and several scholars have explained the conflict management by this theory (Oetzel, Toomey, Yokochi & Masumoto, 2000; Brew & Cairns, 2004; Siira, Rogan & Hall, 2004; Oetzel & Toomey, 2003; Kim, Lee, Kim & Hunter, 2004). Face negotiation theory highlights that individual's actions related to resolving a conflict is dependent on two factors such as organizational hierarchy and self-construal (Oetzel & Toomey, 2003). Self-construal person preferred own concerns instead of other's concerns. When a person has a high concern for self-face then he/she applied dominating conflict management style. On the other hand, a person who is more concerned about others instead of own-self, preferred to use collaborating, avoiding, compromising, and obliging to manage the conflict situations (Oetzel, Meares, Myers & Lara, 2003; Oetzel & Toomey, 2003). The job position of an employee also predicts the conflict management styles. Subordinate is more likely to apply accommodating conflict management style for maintaining a good relationship with boss, he/she do not go for winning an argument with boss (Brew & Cairnes, 2004). Further, the study of (Janićijević, 2013) found that the culture of organization influences the design and implementation of organizational structure. Organizational culture creates attitudes, assumptions, norms, values, and frame of reference that are used by those individuals who made the organizational structure. The cultural context facilitates the implementation of targeted organizational structure. Organizational culture legitimizes the decisions and behaviors imposed on management and employees by organizational structure inside the context of valid norms and values of behavior. On the other side, organizational structure institutionalizes the organizational culture such as attitudes, norms and values. Hence, organizational structure can change or strengthen the present organizational

culture. Thus, the association of organizational structure and culture is twofold (Janićijević, 2013). Several studies have reported that organizational culture impacts the conflict management styles such as collaboration, compromise, accommodation, avoidance, and domination style (Mehr, 2012; Mohammed, 2008; Di Pietro & Di Virgilio, 2013). We can say that organizational structure and self-construal shape the conflict management styles of an individual and it is influenced by culture of an organization, thus we can generate hypothesis as:

H1: Organizational culture and conflict management styles 1a) collaborating, 1b) avoiding, 1c), compromising, and 1d) accommodating have a relationship.

Mediating role of psychological safety

Organizational members have stock of thoughts which they can win or lose. Psychological safety is referred as the belief of employees that their risky behaviors like voice will not encourage personal harm (Detert & Burris, 2007). The study of (Edmondson, 1999) defined psychological safety that it is a shared belief about team safety for interpersonal risk taking. The notion of psychological safety develops the belief of organizational members that they will not suffer nor punished on having negative consequences. This type of concept generates such climate that comes from mutual respect and trust. Individual felt comfortable in this situation (Liu, Liao & Wei, 2015; Edmondson, 1999). In this situation, employees feel comfortable in expressing the differences. The management of an organization encourages their followers to remove obstacles and express ideas, thereby developing an environment of psychological trust. Subordinates can take the risk because they believe that management will not punish them on undesirable results (Walumbwa & Schaubroeck, 2009). The study of (Huang, Chang & Wu, 2017) demonstrate that supportive organizational culture can help the organizational members to have a trust among them. Innovative organization culture also required good interaction among members that promote mutual trust and psychological support in the form of security, encouragement, self-efficacy and affirmation which relieves the psychological stress occurred due to failure in innovation process (Woodman, 1993; Scott et al., 1994). Moreover, the theory of social exchange indicates that mutual trust, mutual benefit, mutual assistance and information sharing of individuals have positive influence on behaviors and attitudes of individuals (Seers, 1989). In this regards, on the base of face negotiation theory, it is explained that a person who are more concerned about others rather than self-face, go for collaborating, avoiding, compromising, and accommodating conflict management styles (Oetzel, Meares, Myers & Lara, 2003; Oetzel & Toomey, 2003). On the other hand, organizational cultures such as supportive and innovative improve the psychological safety of employees by building mutual trust and respect among them and followed collaborating, avoiding, compromising, and obliging conflict management styles in case of conflict. Therefore, we postulate hypotheses as;

H2: Psychological safety acts as a mediator among organizational culture and 2a) collaborating, 2b) comprising, 2c) avoiding, and 2d) accommodating conflict management styles.

In a bureaucratic organizational culture, formalized and centralized decisions are made by supervisors and implemented from top to bottom. In this situation, top management disassociates employees from policy making and leaves it to supervisor's discretion (Tampere, 2016). Further, the study of (Creed & Miles,

Akif

1996) found lower level of trust in centralization organizational setting and lack of trust leads to decrease the efficiency and morale of employees. The theory of face negotiation reports that organizational hierarchy recommends the conflict management styles. Subordinate used accommodating style in which he/she preferred the concerns of top management instead of self-face for maintaining a good relationship (Brew, & Cairnes, 2004). Thus, we made hypothesis as;

H3: Psychological safety acts as a mediator among bureaucratic organizational culture and accommodating conflict management style.

METHODS

Participants and procedures

The data of this study was collected from private and public banks of Pakistan, located in Punjab province. Public organizations has a bureaucratic values and culture (Parker & Bradley, 2000) thus, national bank and state bank of Pakistan were selected. On the other hand, private organizations facilities supportive and innovative organizational culture (Azanza, Moriano & Molero, 2013; Arfat, Mehmood, Rehman & Saleem, 2017) that's why bank Alfalah and Habib bank limited were considered in this study. Three hundred and fifty questionnaires were distributed in private local banks. During working hours, the senior management of each bank was encouraged their employees to take part in the survey. Respondents of the survey were held a various job positions such as branch manager, operational manager, remittance officer, teller officer, and customer service officer. Intentionally, we have chosen the variety of job positions to make sure variance in our dependent constructs, conflict management styles (collaborating, comprising, avoiding, and accommodating). About 295 filled questionnaires were received with 84% response rate. This kind of high response rate is usually uncommon but it is obtained due to encouragement of senior management of banks (Baruch & Holtom, 2008). Of the participants, 71% were males and 29% were female. Thirty percent were post graduate and 70% were graduate qualifications. Twenty seven percent of employees reported their age among 20-25, 35% as among 26-30 and 25% as among 31-35. Fifty one percent were experienced of less than 5 years, 37% among 6-10years, 13% among 11-15 years and rest of employees had more than 15 years.

MEASURES

Organizational culture

In study 1, innovative and supportive organizational cultures were measured in private banks of Pakistan. The Organizational Culture Index (OCI) introduced by Wallach (1983) was used. It had 16-items, following 4-point scale (0-does not explain my bank, 3-explain my bank most of the time). In this study, both subscales have reliability equals .78 and .74.

Psychological safety

The team psychological safety scale introduced by (Edmondson, 1999) was used in this study. The scale has 7-items and it was recorded on 5-likert scale (1-strongly disagree, 5-strongly agree). Edmondson (1999) introduced this scale at team levels. In several studies, the psychological safety scale was used at individual levels (Li & Wu, 2014; Kark & Carmeli, 2009; Saĝnak, 2016). In this study, the Psychological Safety Scale is applied to evaluate at individual levels. This scale has reliability equals 0.75.

Conflict management styles

Conflict management styles (accommodating, collaborating, comprising, avoiding and dominating) was measured with the help of scale “Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventories-II” (ROCI-II) developed by (Rahim, 1983). This scale has 28-items and statements were answered on 5-likert scale (1-strongly disagree, 5-strongly agree). The reliability of scales were accommodating ($\alpha=0.72$), collaborating ($\alpha=0.74$), comprising ($\alpha=0.77$), avoiding ($\alpha=0.70$) and dominating ($\alpha=0.79$) respectively.

RESULTS

Bivariate correlations, standard deviations and means among study variables are shown in **Table 1**. Bivariate correlations indicated the expected results. For example, supportive and innovative organizational culture positive related with psychological safety ($r=0.42, 0.39 p<0.001$). Psychological safety is positive related with accommodating ($r= 0.36, p<0.001$), collaborating ($r=0.31, p<0.001$), comprising ($r=0.29, p<0.001$) and avoiding ($r=0.33, p<0.001$) and negatively related with dominating ($r=0.43, p<0.01$).

Table 1. Means, Standard deviation, correlation and reliabilities.

Constructs	1	2	3	4	6
Organizational culture	0.55**				
Accommodating	0.48**	0.52**			
Collaborating	0.43**	0.35**	0.32**		
Comprising	0.35**	0.48**	0.40**	0.47**	
Avoiding	0.52**	0.52**	0.52**	0.52**	0.52**
Mean	5.11	2.32	6.07	4.24	2.32
SD	3.18	2.38	0.68	0.49	4.32
Cronbach’s α	.82	0.80	0.85	0.83	0.80

Notes: ** $p<0.001$

Measurement models

Three different measures were used in this research. All scales were adapted to banking sector of Pakistan. LISREL 8.7 software was run to test the model fit and confirmatory factor analysis. The fit statistics ($\chi^2=901, SD=469, p<0.01, RMSEA=0.05, NNFI=0.97, NFI=0.95, IFI=0.96, CFI=0.96$) show an acceptable/good model fit (Schumacker & Lomax, 2004; Engel, Moosbrugger & Müller, 2003; Hu & Bentler, 1999).

Hypotheses testing

The process macro for SPSS (Preacher & Hayes, 2008) was applied to do the mediation analysis. In the mediation analysis, hypotheses were tested by directly investigating the significance of indirect effect of the IV (independent variable) on the DV (dependent variable) by M (mediator), classified the product effect of IV on M, and the effect of M on DV, and partialling the influence of the IV, b. The model 4 of the PROCESS macro was used with 5,000 bootstrap samples (Hayes, 2013). **Table 2** reported the results.

Table 2 showed the total effect of organizational culture and accommodation have significant relation ($c=0.44, p<0.01$), similarly with collaborating ($c=0.37, p<0.01$), avoiding ($c=0.27, p<0.01$) and comprising ($c=0.19, p<0.01$) thus hypothesis H1a,

Akif

H1b, H1c, H1d are supported. The indirect effect of OC on AC through PS was significant on estimation point 0.13 and CI (confidence interval) range 0.37 and 0.23. Likewise, the indirect effect of OC on CO through PS with estimation point 0.18 and CI (confidence interval) range 0.21 and 0.42, OC on AV through PS with estimation point 0.21 and CI (confidence interval) range 0.20 and 0.18, and OC on CM through PS with estimation point .23 and CI (confidence interval) range 0.23 and 0.45. As seen intervals do not contain zero thus hypotheses 2a, 2b, 2c are supported.

Table 2. Mediation effects.

95% CI						
Mediation	Total effect	Direct effect	Indirect effect	SE	LL	UL
OC-PS-AC	0.44**	0.23**	0.13**	0.011	0.37	0.23
OC-PS-CO	0.37**	0.20**	0.18**	0.015	0.21	0.42
OC-PS-AV	0.27**	0.19**	0.21**	0.012	0.20	0.18
OC-PS-CM	0.19**	0.24**	0.23**	0.009	0.23	0.45

** $p < 0.01$, SE=Standard error, OC= Organizational culture, AC=Accommodating, CO=Collaborating, AV=Avoiding, CM=Comprising

DISCUSSION

The objective of the study was to check the relationship between organizational culture and conflict management styles. The results of this study is support the past several researches (Poasa, 2000; Psthuma, 2006; Gillespie, 2008; Yilmaz, & Ergan 2008; Lawrence, 2006). The study showed that organizational culture and competition conflict management style have a reserve relationship. While, organizational culture and cooperation style have a direct relationship. Bureaucratic organizational culture is linked with dominating conflict management style (Yazdkhasti et al., 2010; Ahmadi et al., 2009).

IMPLICATIONS

The results of organizational culture and conflict management styles are helpful for the management of banks. Management can identify culture types and used conflict management style accordingly.

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Akif

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