Relationship between conflict management styles and teachers' creativity in west Mazandaran province high schools, Iran

Mohammad Hadi Asgari

Department of Business Management & Accounting, Tonekabon Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tonekabon, Mazandaran, Iran.

Corresponding author email: Mohammad Hadi Asgari,

ABSTRACT: The present research tries to investigate Relationship between conflict management styles and teachers' creativity in west Mazandaran province high schools. This research is a descriptive one which has been conducted using correlation method. Statistical population of the research includes all managers and teachers (male and female) of west Mazandaran province high schools, which are 175 managers and 2396 teachers. Sample size is 123 managers and 331 teachers which were chosen via Morgan table and categorical-accidental method. Data gathering method is library and field method, data gathering tool was Tomas's conflict management styles questionnaire and Rensib's creativity questionnaire. Pearson's correlation coefficient and step-by-step regression and variance analysis were used to analyze data. Findings showed that: There exists significant relationship between conflict management styles (collaboration, accommodation, competition, compromise and avoidance) and teachers' creativity. There exists positive and significant relationship between collaboration, accommodation, and compromise and teachers creativity, but there exists negative and significant relationship between avoidance and competition with teachers' creativity. Collaboration and avoidance styles had the highest shares in predicting teachers' creativity.

Keywords: conflict management, collaboration, competition, compromise, avoidance, accommodation, teachers' creativity.

INTRODUCTION

Conflict is a concept that happens usually in human beings lives and it is especially found in organizations like schools. Humans have adopted different methods to confront this concept and managers have different styles to deal with conflict. Conflict is in fact interactions among individuals that are dependent on each other and feel they have contradicting or incompatible interests. Conflict arises from either individual causes or way of doing something. Conflict management is finding a way to deal with conflict in a reasonable, fair and efficient manner (Mirkamali, 1993, p 60).

Today conflict management has received a lot of attention in organizations because it has caused energy and talents waste in employees and this is not welcome for an organization and its managers (soltani, 1999, p 32). Modern world requires new organizations and new organizations require new managers who are equipped with reasonable judgment and classic educations and novel thoughts based on understanding of values and feelings and believe different factors affect decision-making. Creativity of employees must be reinforced by managers. Complex environments involve coordination and require organizational changes and these changes are obtained from creativity. Organizations must pay special attention to creativity that has been obtained through regular change and this will lead to organizational success. In-bred talent and creativity is necessary for having a creative society. Enrichment of individuals’ creativity will be facilitated through having a flexible culture, establishment of new educational institutions in order to increase human resource capital and paying attention to a society's values that result in human resource progress and initiative (yusuf, 2009).

Most organizations try to employ new staffs that are able to confront unpredicted people and events. In spite of this, recent advances have made leaders to increase creativity and self-sufficiency in their employees instead of attracting such employees, and try to remove weaknesses of their current employees and develop the employees' abilities (Moss, 2009). Creativity and innovation are among the most important goals of educational organizations missions. Recognition of teachers' creativity and abilities is important in improving
thought have significant relationship with creativity dimensions and dimensions of conflict management strategies in public libraries librarians. Research results showed that conflict management styles lead to creativity increase and new ideas generation within organizations especially educational system? This question will affect managers' approach towards conflict. The following sections try to investigate relationship between conflict management styles and teachers' creativity.

Research background

Amiri (2008) conducted a research titled: investigation of relationship between creativity and conflict management strategies among Shiraz hospitals managers. Results showed that managers with higher creativity tend to solutionism method and managers with lower creativity tend to use avoidance strategy.

Nekouyee Moghaddam (2009) conducted a research titled: investigation of relationship between conflict management styles and employees creativity in Kerman city hospitals. Results showed that there exists negative and significant relationship between managers' compulsion style and employees' creativity and also managers' discussion style and employees' creativity. Results showed that reduction in compulsion and discussion styles, employees creativity will increase.

Nargesi (2009) conducted a research titled: investigation of relationship between organizational conflict and employees' creativity of Iran insurance company (case study: Ilam city employees of Iran Insurance Company). Results showed that there exists significant relationship between organizational conflict and employees' creativity and also there exists significant relationship between constructive (functional) conflict and creativity and there exists no relationship between non-constructive (non-functional) conflict and creativity.

Abbasi (1389) conducted a research titled: investigation of conflict management styles in public libraries librarians. Research results showed that conflict management styles have significant relationship with creativity dimensions and dimensions <<need to success>> and <<abstract thought>> can predict conflict management strategy selection. Pearson correlation test results showed that the strategies <<avoidance>> and <<competition>> had significant relationship with 3 creativity dimensions i.e. abstract thought, systemized thought and need to success, but solutionism had positive significant relationship with all creativity dimensions (except for self-confidence).

Shmith (1974) after doing a research on managers found that conflict creates better and more constructive ideas and opinions, makes individuals look for new methods, makes hidden and behind-the-curtain issues become evident and solved, makes individuals' opinions obvious, stimulates creativities and interests and improves ability of managers. Because both factors are related to school environment, managers' must have variable role. A manager's new role is highly dependent on his/her conflict-removed and relationship-amending abilities. The researcher uses 3 questionnaires, organizational conflict questionnaire, relational quality questionnaire and organizational atmosphere description questionnaire. 501 questionnaires were sent to the teachers of 18 primary schools and 199 teachers participated in this research. The results showed a considerable difference between the multi-lateral conflict and relationship quantity (Do'Goharani, 2010).

queen's research (2005) titled: <<relationship between characteristics and conflict management styles in Germany's Colman city primary schools managers>>. Results showed positive and significant relationship between two variables. Only there was no relationship between neurosis and conflict management styles and <<flexibility>>, <<being pleasant>>, <<dutifulness>> and <<extroversion>> can predict conflict management styles.

Lungaroithi and Wilson (2006), conducted a research to investigate perceptions and understandings influence on conflict management in Australian primary schools. in this research, results showed that teachers...
and students regarded conflict as arguing, struggling and lack of coordination and mostly used inactive strategies in solving conflict and rarely used problem-solving and collaboration strategies.

**Research findings**

First hypothesis: there exists relationship between collaboration style and teachers' creativity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>df</th>
<th>r</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>variable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>111</td>
<td>.44***</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>Collaboration style and teachers' creativity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 results show that there is positive and significant relationship between collaboration style and teachers’ creativity from statistical point of view (p<0.05, r=0.423). Positive relationship means increase in collaboration will result in teachers’ creativity.

Second hypothesis

there is relationship between accommodation style and teachers' creativity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>df</th>
<th>r</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>variable</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>111</td>
<td>.34**</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>accommodation style and teachers' creativity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Results of table 2 shows that there is significant relationship between accommodation style and teachers’ creativity (p<0.05, r=0.420). Further, this relationship is positive which means increase in accommodation will lead to teachers’ creativity.

Third hypothesis

here is relationship between compromise style and teachers' creativity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>df</th>
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<th>p</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>variable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>.28*</td>
<td>.021</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>Compromise style and teachers' creativity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Results of table 3 show that there is significant relationship between compromise style and teachers’ creativity (p<0.05, r=0.285). This relationship is positive which means increase in compromise will result in teachers’ creativity.

Fourth hypothesis

there is relationship between competition and teachers' creativity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>111</td>
<td>-.18*</td>
<td>.02</td>
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<td>Competition style and teachers' creativity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Results of table 4 show that there exist significant relationship between competition and teachers’ creativity (p<0.05, r=−0.181) but this relationship is negative, i.e. increase in competition will lead to decrease in teachers’ creativity.

Fifth hypothesis

there is relationship between avoidance style and teachers' creativity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>df</th>
<th>r</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>variable</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>111</td>
<td>-.21*</td>
<td>.021</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>Avoidance style and teachers' creativity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Results of table 5 show that there is significant relationship between avoidance style and teachers’ creativity (p<0.05, r=−0.208). This relationship is negative and this means increase in avoidance will result in teachers' creativity decrease.
Research main hypothesis

there is relationship between conflict management styles and teachers' creativity.

Step-by-step regression model was used to determine the best predictor of creativity. It must be mentioned that collaboration and avoidance styles have been introduced into the equation and the results have been summarized in table 6.

Table 6. Summary of step-by-step regression analysis for collaboration and avoidance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard error</th>
<th>$\Delta R^2$</th>
<th>$R^2$</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>Predicting variables</th>
<th>model</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.13</td>
<td>.177</td>
<td>.179</td>
<td>.447</td>
<td>Collaboration style</td>
<td>first</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.13</td>
<td>.194</td>
<td>.201</td>
<td>.449</td>
<td>Collaboration and avoidance styles</td>
<td>second</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6 results show that collaboration style variable can predict 17.9 % of the variance ($R$-squared=0.179). After adding avoidance variable to collaboration style in the second model, and added 3 percent to the variance ($R$-squared=0.206) and predicts 20.6 % of the variance.

Table 7. Variance analysis test for investigating regression significance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Significance level</th>
<th>F test</th>
<th>Mean of squares (ms)</th>
<th>Degree of freedom (df)</th>
<th>Sum of squares (ss)</th>
<th>Changes resource statistical index</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Collaboration style regression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.22,444</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.22,444</td>
<td>remainder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>78.423</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>78.423</td>
<td>Total sum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Regression of avoidance and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>collaboration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>588,419</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1119,974</td>
<td>remainder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>588,419</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1119,974</td>
<td>Total sum</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to table 7 results, because calculated F for collaboration is significant in 0.05 level ($p<0.05, \text{f}(1,121)=26.322$), then we can conclude with 95 percent of certainty that there is relationship between collaboration style and creativity and collaboration and avoidance styles can predict creativity and in the second model, calculated F for collaboration and avoidance styles is significant in 0.05 level ($p<0.05, \text{f}(2,120)=15.534$). Therefore we can conclude with 95 percent of certainty that there is relationship between collaboration and avoidance and creativity and predicting variables of collaboration and avoidance styles can predict dependent variable i.e. creativity.

Table 8. Regression analysis (collaboration and avoidance styles variables that have been introduced into regression equation using step-by-step model)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Significance error</th>
<th>F test for regression line slope significance</th>
<th>Regression separation coefficient (B)</th>
<th>Standard error</th>
<th>Regression separation coefficient (B)</th>
<th>Changes resource indices</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>First model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5.13</td>
<td>.134</td>
<td>.134</td>
<td>.800</td>
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<td></td>
<td>4.54</td>
<td>.906</td>
<td>.906</td>
<td>.799</td>
<td>Second model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.19</td>
<td>.195</td>
<td>.195</td>
<td>.799</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8 results show that because the calculated $t$ for investigation of regression line slope significance (b) is significant for collaboration style in 0.05 level ($p<0.05, t=5.130$) therefore predicting power of collaboration style for creativity is significant. Also calculated $t$ for avoidance style in 0.05 level is significant ($p<0.05, t=2.019$). Therefore predicting power of avoidance style for creativity is significant. In the first model, collaboration has been introduced into equation and its equation has been shown as:

$$\hat{Y} = a + b_1x_1$$

Creativity$= 48.657 + (0.800) \cdot (\text{collaboration style variable})$

Table 8 results also show that according to step-by-step regression, collaboration style variable has been introduced into equation as the most effective variable and it has been able to predict 42.3 percent of creativity changes and one unit change in collaboration style standard deviation can lead to 0.156 changes in creativity variable’s standard deviation. In the second model, collaboration and avoidance have been introduced into equation as follows:
According to step-by-step regression in the second step, avoidance style regression equation predicts 16.5 percent of creativity variable changes and one unit change in avoidance style standard deviation will change creativity 0.234 unit. Considering the significance of calculated relationship it can be concluded with 95 percent of certainty that the main hypothesis of the research is verified and there is significant relationship between conflict management styles and teachers' creativity.

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

The main hypothesis of the research: there is relationship between conflict management styles and teachers' creativity

Inferential analysis

in order to test the main hypothesis, step-by-step regression was used. Results showed that there is a significant relationship between conflict management styles and teachers' creativity and these styles can predict teachers' creativity. Results of F test and determination coefficients show that collaboration style can be the best predictor for teachers' creativity and after collaboration; avoidance style has the most predicting ability. Furthermore, B coefficient results show that collaboration style power of managers for teachers' creativity is positive and significant. But predicting power of managers' avoidance style for teachers' creativity is negative and significant. Therefore it can be said that increase in collaboration style and decreases in avoidance style in solving school conflicts will increase teachers' creativity. Results of the present research match the results of researches conducted by Abbasi (2010), Shmith (1974), Nargesi (2009).

First hypothesis

there is relationship between managers' collaboration and teachers' creativity.

Inferential analysis

results of Pearson correlation coefficient for the first hypothesis reveal that there is positive and significant relationship between managers' use of collaboration style for solving conflict and teachers' creativity. This means increase in collaboration will result in teachers' creativity. This result matches that of Thomas's (1976) and Abbasi's research results (2010).

Second hypothesis

there is relationship between managers' accommodation style and teachers' creativity.

Inferential analysis

results of Pearson correlation coefficient test for the second hypothesis show that there is positive and significant relationship between managers' use of accommodation style and teachers' creativity. This means increase in accommodation style will increase teachers' creativity. This result matches that of Abbasi's research (2010).

Third hypothesis

there is relationship between teachers' creativity and managers' compromise style.

Inferential analysis

results of Pearson correlation coefficient test for the third hypothesis show that there is positive and significant relationship between managers' use of compromise style and teachers' creativity. This means increase in compromise style will increase teachers' creativity. This result matches that of Abbasi's research (2010), because his research proved relationship between compromise style and creativity. But the present research results do not match Nekouyee Moghaddam's results (2009), because his research results showed negative and significant relationship between compromise and creativity.

Fourth hypothesis

there is relationship between managers' competition style and teachers' creativity.

Inferential analysis

results of Pearson correlation coefficient test for the fourth hypothesis show that there is negative and significant relationship between managers' use of competition style and teachers' creativity. This means
increase in compromise style will decrease teachers’ creativity. This result does not match that of Abbasi’s research (2010), because his research showed positive and significant relationship between competition and creativity. But the present research results match that of Nekouyee Moghaddam’s results because his research results showed negative and significant relationship between competition style and creativity.

**Fifth hypothesis**

there is relationship between manager’s avoidance style and teachers’ creativity.

**Inferential analysis**

results of Pearson correlation coefficient test for the fifth hypothesis show that there is negative and significant relationship between managers’ use of avoidance style and teachers’ creativity. This means increase in avoidance style will decrease teachers’ creativity. This result does not match that of Abbasi’s research (2010), because his research showed positive and significant relationship between avoidance and creativity.

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