Relationship among Conflict Management Styles, Levels of Conflict and Reactions to Work in Nepalese Commercial Banks

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Abstract

This study examines the relationship among conflict management styles, levels of conflict, and reactions to work in Nepalese commercial banks. Employee performance is selected as the dependent variable. Similarly, avoiding styles, integrating styles, compromising styles, collaborating styles, and obliging styles are selected as the independent variables. This study is based on primary data with 141 observations. To achieve the purpose of the study, structured questionnaire is prepared. The correlation coefficients and regression models are estimated to test the significance and importance of different factors affecting conflict management styles on employee performance in Nepalese commercial banks.

The study showed that avoiding style has a positive impact on employee performance. It shows that the higher the avoiding style higher would be the employee performance. Similarly, integrating style has a positive impact on employee performance. It shows that the higher the integrating style higher would be the employee performance. Moreover, compromising style has a positive impact on employee performance. It shows that the higher the compromising style higher would be the employee performance. Likewise, collaborating style has a positive impact on employee performance. It shows that the higher the collaborating style higher would be the employee performance. Further, the obliging style has a positive impact on employee performance. It shows that the higher the obliging style higher would be the employee performance.

Keywords: avoiding style, integrating style, compromising style, collaborating style and obliging style, employee performance.

1. Introduction

Conflict is a natural, everyday phenomenon in all private and working spheres. It is an unavoidable component of human activity that may be viewed as a situation in which the concerns of two or more individuals appear to be incompatible and which tends to occur when individuals or groups perceive that

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others are preventing them from attaining their goals (Brahnam *et al*., 2005). Similarly, conflict is an interactive process manifested in incompatibility, disagreement, or dissonance within or between social entities (Rahim, 2002). Managing conflict is extremely important for the effective functioning of organizations and for the personal, cultural, and social development of employees in the workplace (Lamle *et al.,* 2019). Moreover, conflict is a natural, everyday phenomenon in all private and working spheres. It is an unavoidable component of human activity that may be viewed as a situation in which the concerns of two or more individuals appear to be incompatible and which tends to occur when individuals or groups perceive that others are preventing them from attaining their goals (Brahnam *et al*., 2005).

Integrating indigenous strategies is the most preferred style of managing conflicts as measured by indigenous scales in different researched settings (Akhtar & Hassan, 2021). Similarly, Awan and Ibrahim (2015) stated that if individuals do not have the communication or interpersonal skills to resolve their disputes, the conflict can grow and spread to others, eventually affecting their job performance. Further, Awan and Anjum (2015) stated that properly managed conflict promotes open communication, collaborative decision-making, regular feedback, and timely resolution of conflict. Moreover, Howell (2014) stated conflict originally meant to strike at another, to fight with an enemy, or to do battle with an opposing force.

According to Green and Marks (2001), a compromising style gives team members a better understanding of the others in the team and as a result, it enhances commitment among employees towards the organization. Similarly, Employees that use 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 need of others (Havenga and Visagie, 2006). Further, workplace conflict has also been shown to have a positive relationship with absenteeism and employee sickness (Giebels and Janssen, 2005). Moreover, conflict management strategies refer to the internal mechanisms used by various authorities in resolving conflict (Adeyemi and Ademilua, 2012).

The study found that the communication gap between the authorities and the workers was found to be the major cause of conflict in the universities. The study also found that the effectiveness of the existing conflict management strategies used in Nigerian universities was at a moderate level. Similarly, Sehrawat and Sharma (2014) examined the choice of conflict management style among managers in north India in relation to their leadership style.

The findings supported the claim of positive impact of leadership on conflict management. Moreover, Lee (2008) examined an examination between the relationships of conflict management styles and employees' satisfaction. The study found that a notion that the effectiveness of conflict handling style does relate to the situation and context of the job environment.

Kim *et al.* (2007) examined the conflict management styles: the differences among the Chinese, Japanese, and Koreans. The study indicated that Koreans, compared with the Chinese and Japanese, were more likely to use a compromise style. The study also found that the Chinese, Japanese, and Koreans are somewhat different from one another in dealing with interpersonal conflicts with their supervisors. Similarly, Henry (2009) examined organizational conflict and its effects on organizational performance. The study revealed that it's the prime responsibility of the management to ensure that the available scarce resources are utilized properly for the benefit of the organization and other stakeholders. Moreover, Slabbert (2004) examined the conflict management styles in traditional organizations. The study found significant differences between the two groups. The study also found that middle management preferred the assertive style.

Yu *et al.* (2006) examined the relationship of emotional intelligence with conflict management styles. The findings revealed that supervisors' emotional intelligence had a significant influence on subordinates' dominating style – positively, not negatively as predicted. Similarly, Hussain and Mujtaba (2012) examined the impact of work-life on employee job performance. The study found that gender has no significant effect on performance and work-life conflicts whereas the marital status of the respondents had a significant impact on work-life conflicts. Likewise, Agwu (2013) examined conflict management and employee performance in Julius Berger Nigeria plc. Bonny Island. The findings revealed that conflict management strategies are in place at Julius Berger Nigeria plc. Bonny Island has been relatively useful in minimizing the incidence of disruptive conflicts. Moreover**,** Islam & Rimi (2017) examined the conflict management technique in private commercial banks of Bangladesh. The study revealed collaborative efforts tend to take the most time compared to other conflict resolution styles as in this style both parties try to solve their problem.

Awan & Saeed (2015) examined conflict management and organizational performance. The study found that there was no significant reference between the opinion of male and female respondents regarding the

cause of conflict. The study also found that management must adopt conflict management strategies that improved the performance of the organization. Similarly, Samantara & Sharma (2016) examined the organizational conflict literature. The study found that communication-inhibiting factors were most significantly related to the composite measure of the conflict variables. The study also found that confrontation or problem–solving emerged as the most effective method of conflict resolution, and it was followed by smoothing behavior. Moreover, Momanyi & Juma (2016) explored the influence of conflict management strategies on employee satisfaction. The study found that the organization used the strategies of accommodating, compromising, competing, collaborating, and avoiding to different extents.

Karakaş & Sahin (2017) examined the relationship between work-family conflict and employee performance. The study found that there is no significant relationship between work-family conflict and job performance; there is a moderate positive relationship between work-family conflict and job stress. Moreover, Alshaabani & Rudnák (2022) examined the impact of trust on employees' engagement. The study found that CMC could partially positively mediate the relationship between trust and employee engagement. Further, Hussein *et al.* (2022) examined the influence of Perceived Leadership Styles on Employee Commitment. The study found that conflict management has a positive and significant mediation role between all mentioned leadership styles and employee commitment. Moreover, Akhwand *et al.* (2023) examined the role of training dental surgeons and their residents at the graduate level to avoid conflicts in the workplace. The study found that interaction between dental specialists and residents is inevitable and is essential for the smooth running of daily tasks and schedules.

In the context of Nepal, KC (1993) examined conflict management in Nepalese organizations. The study was based on a primary source of data. The study found that organizational conflicts have both functional (constructive) and dysfunctional (destructive) aspects. Similarly, Upreti (2004) examined resource conflicts and conflict resolution in Nepal. The study found that the modernization of existing formal conflict resolution systems is urgently needed in Nepal. Likewise, Acharya & Yasmi (2008) investigated the conflict management strategy adopted in the community forestry of Nepal. The study found that avoiding strategy is the most often use strategy in both larger and smaller community forests. Further, Kishor & Ogunlana (2011) examined conflict dynamics in a dam construction project. The study found that public participation, adequate compensation and resettlement, and information

sharing with the affected people have the potential to reduce conflict during the construction phase.

The above discussion shows that the empirical evidences vary greatly across the studies on the relationship among conflict management styles, levels of conflict, and reactions to work in commercial banks. Though there are above-mentioned empirical evidence in the context of other countries and in Nepal, no such findings using more recent data exist in the context of Nepal. Therefore, in order to support one view or the other, this study has been conducted.

The main purpose of the study is to analyze the relationship among conflict management styles, levels of conflict, and reactions to work in Nepalese commercial banks. Specifically, it examines the impact of avoiding style, integrating style, compromising style, collaborating style, and obliging style on employee performance in commercial banks in Nepal.

The remainder of this study is organized as follows. Section two describes the sample, data and methodology. Section three presents the empirical results and the final section draws the conclusion.

2. Methodological aspects

The study is based on the primary data. The data were gathered from 141 respondents through a questionnaire. The respondents' views were collected on avoiding style, integrating style, compromising style, collaborating style, and obliging style. The study used descriptive and causal-comparative research design.

The model

The model estimated in this study assumes that employee performance depends on avoiding style, integrating style, compromising style, collaborating style, and obliging style. The dependent variable selected for the study is employee performance. Similarly, the selected independent variables are avoiding style, integrating style, compromising style, collaborating style, and obliging style. Therefore, the model takes the following form:

$$CBB = \beta_0 + \beta_1 AS + \beta_2 IS + \beta_3 CPS + \beta_4 CBS + \beta_5 OS + e$$

Where,

EP= Employee performance

OS = Avoiding style

IS = Integrating style

CPS = Compromising style

CBS = Collaborating style

OS= Obliging style

Avoiding style was measured using a 5-point Likert scale where respondents were asked to indicate the responses using 1 for strongly disagree and 5 for strongly agree. There are 5 items and sample items include "Management tries to avoid an unpleasant environment with the employees.", "In my organization, when there is conflict, management usually says very little and tries not to get involved." and so on. The reliability of the items was measured by computing the Cronbach's alpha (α = 0.914).

Integrating style was measured using a 5-point Likert scale where the respondents were asked to indicate the responses using 1 for strongly disagree and 5 for strongly agree. There are 5 items and sample items include "My superior collaborates with us to come up with decisions acceptable to us", "My manager prefers to go for negotiation to handle the conflicting situation" and so on. and so on. The reliability of the items was measured by computing the Cronbach's alpha (α =0.902).

Compromising style was measured using a 5-point Likert scale where the respondents were asked to indicate the responses using 1 for strongly disagree and 5 for strongly agree. There are 5 items and sample items include "Management in my organization provides satisfying decisions between both parties", "My superior uses "give and take" so that a compromise can be made", and so on. The reliability of the items was measured by computing the Cronbach's alpha (α =0. 0.907).

Collaborating style was measured using a 5-point Likert scale where the respondents were asked to indicate the responses using 1 for strongly disagree and 5 for strongly agree. There are 5 items and sample items include "In my organization, parties in conflict work together to find a solution acceptable to all", "Conflict situations in my organization are often critically analyzed to identify the real concern of the parties to find satisfactory solutions", and so on. The reliability of the items was measured by computing the Cronbach's alpha (α = 0.920).

Obliging style was measured using a 5-point Likert scale where the respondents were asked to indicate the responses using 1 for strongly disagree and 5 for strongly agree. There are 5 items and sample items include "My superior usually accommodates the wishes of mine", "My superior gives priority to employee's life over official work", and so on. The reliability of the items was measured by computing the Cronbach's alpha ($\alpha = 0.923$).

Employee performance was measured using a 5-point Likert scale where the respondents were asked to indicate the responses using 1 for strongly disagree and 5 for strongly agree. There are 5 items and sample items include "I understand the duties and responsibilities of the work and complete the task with the level of proficiency required", "I plan and organize work well, coordinate with others, and established appropriate priorities", and so on. The reliability of the feature was measured by computing the Cronbach's alpha ($\alpha = 0.922$).

The following section describes the independent variables used in this study along with hypothesis formulation.

Avoiding style

Rahim (2002) found that avoiding style has been associated with withdrawal, buck-passing, or side-steeping situations. According to Thomas and Kilmann, (1978), there is a positive relationship between the use of avoiding style and employee job performance. Yasin and Khalid (2015) revealed that the teachers mostly used the avoiding conflict management styles to enhance the commitment and motivation of junior teachers. According to Tosi *et al.* (1994), the avoidance style is commonly used by people who are emotionally upset by the tensions and frustrations of conflict. Al-Hamdan *et al.* (2014) found that men were more likely to use an avoidance style than women. Based on it, this study develops the following hypothesis:

H_1: There is a positive relationship between avoiding style and employee performance.

Integrating style

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 (Rahim, 2002). Integrating style concerns collaboration between parties to reach an acceptable solution (Rahim & Magner, 1995). Jehn (1997) developed that integrating style has

a strong corporation with employee job performance. The study found that there is a positive correlation between integrating strategies and employee performance (Rahim, 2002). The findings of a multiple discriminant analysis indicated that the respondents were mainly obliging with superiors, integrating with subordinates, and compromising with peers (Rahim, 1986). Shih & Susanto (2010) found that integrating style partially mediates the relationship between EI and job performance. Based on it, this study develops the following hypothesis:

H_2: There is a positive relationship between integrating style and employee performance.

Compromising style

This style is a situation in which each party to a conflict is willing to give up something. Greenberg (1986) found that compromising style and employee job performance have a positive relationship. Likewise, According to Green and Marks (2001), compromising styles team members a better understanding of others in terms and as a result it enhances commitment among employees towards the organization. Gross and Guerrero (2000) found that compromising was perceived as a relatively neutral style, although some participants judged their partners to be more effective and relationally appropriate if they compromised. Tevfik & Ahmet (2017) found a positive relationship between a compromising style of conflict management and employee performance which avoids conflict in the organization. Lin *et al.* (2016) found that a compromising style helps solve interpersonal conflicts but it does not necessarily increase individuals' well-being. Based on it, this study develops the following hypothesis:

H_3: There is a positive relationship between compromising style and employee performance.

Collaborating style

Collaborating style is known as the problem-solving style. Collaborating style yields positive outcomes for both parties involved in conflicts. Rahim (2002) revealed that collaborating is the most preferred style to manage conflict. This study concluded that collaborating style in decision-making results in increased productivity, job satisfaction, employee performance, and effectiveness. Jehn (1997) found that collaborating strategy has a strong association with job satisfaction and employee performance. Islam and Rimi (2017) found that collaborative efforts tend to take the most time compared

to other conflict resolution styles. Chandolia & Anastasiou (2020) found that leadership and conflict management style can be associated with the effectiveness of collaborating style. Based on it, this study develops the following hypothesis:

H_5: there is a positive relationship between collaborating style and employee performance.

Obliging style

This style is also called smoothing or accommodating. Awan and Saeed (2015) found a positive and significant impact of the obliging style on the employee commitment and performance of Askari Bank Limited. Shore and Martin (1989) found that performance is associated with turnover, and the organization is more strongly related to turnover intentions. Gross and Guerrero (2000) found that obliging style was generally perceived as neutral, although some participants perceived themselves to be less effective and relationally appropriate when they employed obliging tactics. The study showed that higher degree of obliging style results in solving interpersonal conflict between supervisors and employees (Kim *et al.*, 2007). Based on it, this study develops the following hypothesis:

H_4: There is a positive relationship between obliging style and employee performance.

3. Results and discussion

Correlation analysis

On analysis of data, correlation analysis has been undertaken first and for this purpose, Kendall's Tau correlation coefficients along with means and standard deviations have been computed, and the results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Kendall's Tau correlation coefficients matrix

This table presents Kendall's Tau coefficients between dependent and independent variables. The correlation coefficients are based on 141 observations. The dependent variable is EP (employee performance). The independent variables are AS (avoiding style), IS (integrating style), CPS (compromising style), CBS (collaborating style), and OS (obliging style).

Variables	Mean	S.D.	EP	AS	IS	CPS	CBS	OS
EP	3.8028	0.90142	1					
AS	2.9121	1.01485	0.114	1				
IS	3.4142	0.86904	0.375**	0.222**	1			
CPS	3.4028	0.87046	0.405**	0.199**	0.604**	1		
CBS	3.4596	0.93679	0.421**	1.156*	0.476**	0.528**	1	
OS	3.4085	0.93926	0.478**	0.258**	0.466**	0.575**	0.508**	1

Note: The asterisk signs (**) and (*) indicate that the results are significant at one percent and five percent levels respectively.

Table 1 shows that avoiding style has positive relationship with the employee performance. It means that increase avoiding style in leads to increase in employee performance. Similarly, integrating style has a positive relationship with employee performance. It means that increase in integrating style leads to increase in employee performance. Likewise, compromising style has a positive relationship with employee performance. It means that increase in compromising styl leads to increase in employee performance. Furthermore, there is a positive relationship between collaborating style and employee performance. It indicates that increase in collaborating style leads to increase in employee performance. Further, this study shows that there is a positive relationship between obliging style and employee performance. It means that increase in obliging style leads to increase in employee performance.

Regression analysis

Having indicated the Kendall's Tau correlation coefficients, the regression analysis has been carried out and the results are presented in Table 2. More specifically, it presents the regression results of avoiding, integrating, compromising, collaborating, and obliging styles on employee performance in commercial banks in Nepal.

Table 2

Estimated regression results of Avoiding, Integrating, Compromising, Collaborating, and Obliging styles on Employee performance in commercial banks in Nepal

The results are based on 141 observations using linear regression model. The model is EP= $\beta 0 + \beta 1 AS + \beta 2 IS + \beta 3 CPS + 4 CBS + \beta 5 OS + \varepsilon$ where the dependent variable is (EP) employee performance. The independent variables are (AS) avoiding style, (IS) integrating style, (CPS) compromising style, (CBS) collaborating style, and (OS) obliging style.

Model	Intercept	Regression coefficients of					Adj. R_bar²	SEE	F-value
		AS	IS	CPS	CBS	OS			
1	3.231 (14.265)	0.196 (2.673)					0.042	0.882	7.14
2	1.9 (7.271)		0.557 (7.509)				0.283	0.763	56.38
3	1.809 (7.113)			0.586 (8.091)			0.315	0.745	65.47
4	1.902 (7.922)				0.549 (8.199)		0.321	0.743	67.22
5	1.834 (7.981)					0.578 (8.888)	0.358	0.722	79.00
6	1.863 (6.639)	0.026 (0.378)	0.546 (6.833)				0.279	0.765	28.09
7	1.557 (5.523)	0.005 (0.083)	0.270 (2.491)	0.385 (3.615)			0.337	0.734	29.72
8	1.348 (4.822)	0.000 (0.007)	0.196 (1.834)	0.223 (1.960)	0.296 (3.300)		0.382	0.709	22.60
9	1.259 (4.629)	-0.032 (0.510)	0.200 (1.933)	0.054 (0.446)	0.205 (2.248)	0.311 (3.216)	0.421	0.686	21.39

Notes:

i.   Figures in parenthesis are t-values
ii. The asterisk signs (**) and (*) indicate that the results are significant at one percent and five percent level respectively.
iii. Employee performance is dependent variable.

Table 2 shows that the beta coefficients for avoiding style are positive with the employee performance. It indicates that avoiding style has positive impact on the employee performance. This finding is consistent with the findings of Thomos and Kilmann (1978). Likewise, the beta coefficients for integrating style are positive with the employee performance. It indicates that integrating style have positive impact on the employee performance. This finding is consistent with the findings of Rahim (2002). In addition, the beta coefficients for compromising style are positive with the employee performance. It indicates that compromising style has a positive impact on the employee performance. This result is consistent with the findings of Mbithe (2001). Further, the beta coefficients collaborating style are positively related with the employee performance. It indicates that collaborating style has a positive impact on the employee performance. This finding is consistent with the findings of Jehn (1997). Moreover, the beta coefficient for obliging style are positive with the employee performance which indicates that obliging style has positive impact on the employee performance. This result is consistent with the findings of Awan and Saeed (2015).

4. Summary and conclusion

Conflict is a natural, everyday phenomenon in all private and working

spheres. It is an unavoidable component of human activity that may be viewed as a situation in which the concerns of two or more individuals appear to be incompatible and which tends to occur when individuals or groups perceive that others are preventing them from attaining their goals. More broadly, conflict is an interactive process manifested in incompatibility, disagreement, or dissonance within or between social entities. Managing conflict is extremely important for the effective functioning of organizations and for the personal, cultural, and social development of employees in the workplace. Conflict management strategies are defined as the behavioral methods used to resolve conflict.

This study attempts to examine the relationships among conflict management style, levels of conflict, and reactions to work in Nepalese commercial banks. The study is based on primary data with 141 observations.

The study also showed that avoiding style, integrating style, compromising style, collaborating style, and obliging style has a positive relationship with consumer buying behavior. The study concluded that avoiding style, integrating style, compromising style, collaborating style, and obliging style have a significant role in increasing employee performance. The study also concluded that the most influencing factor is the obliging style followed by collaborating style and compromising style that explains employee performance.

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