



Exploring the Role of Intra-Cultural Diversity in Defining Conflict Types and Managing Conflict Using Different Conflict Management Style – with Special Reference to India

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ABSTRACT

In current world of globalization, it is well known fact that, major concern for practitioners is to give their focus towards behavioral aspects of their employees to elicit better performance especially when they are running operations in multi cultural environment. Researchers and practitioners overwhelmingly accepted that proper framework of human resource policy will lead a company with full integrity, and it is the extent to which top management gives priority to value orientations in particular. This value orientation has its own research history from 1940's, thanks to the anthropologists. Nevertheless modern managers have given a thought to this value orientation in their respective forums. Even many research works have also been conducted to find the correlation between values and organizational variables like job satisfaction etc. There are many outcomes that organization is expecting from this value orientation, one such is how far employees are able to adjust themselves when they are facing multi cultural environment. This paper through review of literature on organizational values, individual values and cultural values, tries to derive few assumptions in Indian context, how these values and subcultures are influencing conflict management style among Indians. This study tries to create a platform for cross cultural researchers who are concentrating on Intra cultural diversity, as the research of integrating Intra cultural diversity and conflict management styles seems to be sparse in nature in Indian context.

KEYWORDS: Intra cultural diversity, Conflict management styles, cultural values

Introduction

It has become mandatory for every organization to focus on value alignment when it operates under multicultural environment. It is evident from research that value led organizations are well performing (Dearlove and coomber 1999). For the past two decades researchers have started pondering on several issues in multicultural team performance viz cross-cultural leadership, Commitment, role of group personality in organizational effectiveness, cross cultural management interactions, and much more. For instance in the case of NUMMI, where managers were in position to make reconciliation between Americans and Japanese culture to bring out the better performance. They were expected to reconcile the cultural differences viz Individualistic vs Communitarist, specific vs diffuse, Achievement vs ascription, Sequential vs synchronous, Inner directed vs outer directed, low vs high uncertainty avoidance, Low power distance vs high power distance. In NUMMI's case, trainers felt far cultural differences in problem solving, For Americans, the response for the query, how things are? is "No problem", but for Japanese it is the problem and it is the duty of the manager to see the problem which is part and parcel of organizational life which can be easy to solve. Moreover it is wise to learn from the mistakes which we do that will change one's attitude. They used to mention it as lean cultural Shift. When they did this shift they have witnessed tremendous change in 1992 when compare to 1982. Here since values are determining the behavior and attitude, which in turn determines the employees satisfaction and performance, managers are very much concern about value alignment.

When value alignment comes into picture, it's mandatory for an organization to contemplate on three kinds of values. One is that what organization hold, second what employees have as their individual values and last one is the values which employees are bringing from their place of origin. Among these three values the second and third values are playing an important role in influencing the organizational values where human resource managers are highly concerned. Coming to organizational values, it is necessary for the top management to take into consideration whether the values are being practiced uniformly throughout the organization, hence this can be achieved only when the top management tries to synchronize different kinds of values discussed, which we are calling as value alignment.

Normally values are considered in cultural perspective, it is the homogenous concept comes into picture where considering entire nation under one cultural dimension, for instance considering India under collectivist umbrella, nevertheless there are arguments on diversity in terms of "strange dualism", still there are several issues has to ponder on Intra

cultural diversity, whether values among these subcultures is varying among the members. Precisely individual values of different cultural background within the same nation are the major concern of this paper. This paper is divided in to three parts., First part focuses to get more clarification on the terminology, "values", where major concentration is being given to Organizational values, individual values and Cultural values. Second part tries to propose hypothesis on the direct influence of cultural value on the conflict management, and also the influence of individual values on this relationship. The third part tries to give its implications on organizational behavior.

Review of Literature:

In order to maintain the integrity and service excellence in an organization it is said that organization should have values which should elicit some preferred behavior from employees and should synchronize with organizational goal. These values are normally discussed in the terms of Integrity, customer focus, quality, accountability. Effectiveness of organizational values depend mainly on two factors one is situation and persons involved. It will be rewarding experience for an individual if he or she identify him or herself in an organization where organizational values are clearly defined and known to the individuals. At the same time this organizational values as guiding principle should not confused with specific practices be it operational or culture based. It is very much appreciable to identify the values of any organization from its documents rather than a value that is being spoken by senior managers (see Boris Kabanoff Joseph Daly 2002). Thus these values can be clearly identified from the process, structure that organization holds. The type of structure that organization follows will determine its overall value system. For instance if organization follows elite value structure, then it will give emphasis on unequal power relation and deemphasizes the values of egalitarianism unlike the organization which follows egalitarian structure.

Nevertheless, the values which are being followed by the organization has to satisfy the values that an individual possess, which has its own space in psychological research where concentration has been given in the area of attitude, individual behavior and their intentions (Peter Gahan and Lakmal Abysekara 2009). Human values are considered to be the guiding principle in one's life as per Schwartz et.al (1995). Rokeach (1973) has identified two types of individual values, one as instrumental and another one as terminal values, where former being the reason for the latter. Some of the instrumental values are love, ambition, self control, etc. Some of the terminal values are happiness equality and freedom.

Meanwhile Rokeach (1979) says that it is the demand raised by the society and the need of an individual paves the way for his or her own value system. That's how we could see the similar values prevailing among the individuals who belong to the same profession (Robbins 2006) which is applicable to the societies as well. For all these afore said values, culture plays an important role, if we see the works of Hofstede (1991), he places culture in the middle place in his three levels of Human mental programming, where he talks about different layers of culture viz national level, regional level, gender, generation, social class. Here he felt values can be learned by individual implicitly but not consciously from his childhood, where he has taken the evidences from development psychologists. Among all levels this study concentrates on the regional level as Hofstede tried to explain the regional level culture in terms of ethnic and Linguistic affiliations. These regional level has been the focus for many cross cultural researchers in recent decades in the heterogeneity perspective, which made them to rethink on concept convergence within nation. Posner (1992) felt authors have tried to differentiate among organizational value, personal, national values, occupational values.

Hence it is evident from the review of literature that organizational values and individual values have to have congruence for effective functioning. Practitioners look at their employees behaviors as "value congruent", and those are being taught not only by means of written procedure but also through softer means which include rewards too (Dolan and Garcia (2002)). From management especially training and development perspective, success of an organization not only depends on its values, but to which extent employees' value system, comprises of his or her own value system and values that are being commonly shared by their nation or region influences and getting aligned with those organizational values. If the value are congruent even employees will get self motivated and happier (Berings et.al., 2004).

Among other aspects of organizational behavior the afore said values are seems to be playing a vital role in determining conflict of both type viz Affective and task conflict and managing the same. There are studies which talk on cultural effects on conflict management says societies which are practicing collectivism always bends toward accommodating and avoiding type of conflict management (Ting Toomey 2000), also it has been evidenced from the work of Kozan and Ergin (1999) that societies which are considering themselves as conservatives always prefers avoidance style of conflict management style, there is also significant differences in conflict management techniques across nations based on cultural dimensions like power distance and uncertainty avoidance proposed by Hofstede (Yasmini S et.al 2006). But research of this kind is sparse in nature taking subculture into consideration (M.Kamil Kozan 2002). Since India is known for its diversity, it is mandatory for us to take the subcultures into consideration and its implications on organizational behavior. Nevertheless many studies have been done, even there are research which denies altogether the universal cultural dimensions proposed by several authors viz Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck, Hofstede, Trompenaars, stating that those dimensions are not suitable for those nations which have subcultures like India. While understanding the importance of globalization, liberalization, identifying the effect of subculture and Individual values on conflict management becomes a major theme of this paper.

Exploring the role of Intra cultural and individual values of Indian employees in determining conflict types and conflict management styles

India is known for its diversity with respect to socio political, economy, historical and regions in terms of language, tropical conditions, with full of heterogeneous in nature. It is said that India is having cultural background of more than 5000 years, and every region in India has its own distinction. As per the census of India 2001 it is said that different languages belonging to Indo Aryan Group is being used by three fourth of the population for their daily communication, Nearly 40 percent of the total population speaks Hindi and majority of them are from northern states. Languages that are belonging to Dravidian family is being used for the communication by the southern state (Devaki, L. and Kou, O.N. (2000),

Apart from Language it is the religious philosophy that plays an important role in deciding Indian personality traits, Importance of this subculture research has been done by eminent scholars like Chakraborty, Das, Bhal, Debnath, Sharma, Sinha etc. subculture research has its own implications in management arena, for instance, Indian managers are

seems to be autocratic though they admit themselves for value freedom, also they are high on context sensitivity which made managers to have drastic change in their behaviors especial post independence. This made them to have reflection of social values in their work culture (Sinha and Kanungo, 1990, 1997).

Personalized relationship seems to be a convincing factor for Indian subordinates when it comes to contractual relationship, Sinha (1984) Rajesh Kumar (2004). In the work of Bhalla (2006) they quoted clearly the words of Chandrashekar (1973) who stated that North Indians have the opinion that south Indians in their activities are not so active, in turn south Indians north Indians are dominated by associations. Subculture researches has main theme in general that Indians have influenced by three factors viz Our Own philosophy (Upanishads and Ramayana), secondly by invasion starting from Aryan Invasion down to British Invasion, and lastly globalization and modernization. It has also been discussed that Agricultural profession also played the role of value creators among Indians. In this current scenario are Indians are sailing with different value system viz Values from Religion, Values from Profession, Values from Modernization? Hence it is showing that

H1 There are significant differences in Cultural values among employees from different states within India

Which may have its own implications on management as it is well proven that cultural values plays an important role in deciding the value orientation within organization. This is the pondering area where clear cut empirical data is seems to be sparse. Nevertheless as Indian we have been influenced highly by religion that is the reason why now a days we never used to skip our religious functions even in MNC, it is for two reasons, one, we have to show our "Unity in diversity" and next is to show the indigenous value system. Then what is the way to find a clear cut demarcation between different value systems on which Indians are much relied on? The Only way is to segregate the states under some variables.

Attempt has been made by Malay Biswas et.al 2010 These scholars wanted to identify to how far philosophy plays an important role, referred as layer one or core traditional values. In that line Sunil Kumara et.al 2008 tried to classify Indian states as cluster and they came with few antecedents by which states can be grouped. Variables identified are Social Identity, historical context Economic parameters, institutional factors and geography, In that classification, notable factor is that Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu comes under the same cluster which means it has the same attributes. Likewise few other states in Northern part of India come under same cluster. Since this classification is done on based physical attributes, psychological attributes have to be analyzed as to how far these attributes getting aligned among the individual of those clusters. It is stated that one of the factors determining ones personality are the societal values,

H2 Individuals from a state do have more or less the same Individual values when compare to individuals from another State

Economic status and Literacy status of each state are the two parameters this study has taken, to posit few hypothesis on the role and influence of value systems viz Cultural values and Individual values on conflict management styles. The reason behind taking economy is, it is one of the major factors that determine the culture as per the literature review. Looking at the above fact hypothetical statement can be framed stating, employees who are all coming from the states where entry of modernization is seems to be more will have considerable level of influence of Individual values in their perception of Conflict and handling the conflict. For instance, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka had the advantage of having large public sectors. Adding to the above fact, Bangalore, Hyderabad, and Chennai became the IT hubs which added the fuel for economic growth. During the fiscal 2006-2007 Karnataka and Tamil Nadu got the opportunity of placing itself in fourth and third position in FDI approvals. The Northern parts of India, thanks to green revolution which gave both social and economic development to the regions like Haryana, Punjab. Chandigarh is said to have highest per capita GDP when compare to other Indian states. Hence we have two classifications of states based on High economic growth. One is economic growth due to agriculture and another one is High economic growth due to Modernization, where FDI, IT, BPO have their influence. Review of Literature says whenever there is economic growth is high, Individualistic tendency will be more. Since India has states of economic growth on the basis of agriculture and Modernization it can be

hypothesized that

H3 Individuals from the states of higher economic growth due to modernization will have more individualistic tendency than Individuals from the states of Higher Economic Growth due to agriculture

With regard to conflict management styles, Whether Individual values, professional values or cultural value from where the person hails plays an important role in determining the conflict management styles and perceiving the conflict is the question which has to be pondered with respect to Indian management context. Tripathi and sinha (1994) has stated that it will be misleading if research considers Indians under the umbrella of collectivism as many subcultures are coexisting in Indian psyche. Hence by applying universal theories proposed by many authors like Hofstede, Trompenars, etc persay will not sufficient determine the differences in perception of conflict, with conflict management technique. Hence it is wise if research takes individual values into account for measurement.

FIG 1.1

Individual from the same category or job said to have similar individual values. Individual values are becoming instrumental for major decision making (David McGuire 2006), and those values are formed because psychological and social Conflicts (Schwartz 1994) which means that values that an individual posses is being influenced by society as well along with family and employment Gamble and Gibson (1999). In India Agarwal and sinha (2000) attempted to make a correlation between the value system and leadership style especially in the south east India they conducted the study and found the there is a significant relationship between this variables. There is a study in which, Ali et al. (1995) says that there are high possibilities for societal or national culture to influence the individual values when the study is being conducted to find out the relationship between the types of decision making and values.

H4 Individual values may act as moderating variable in the relationship between conflict management techniques and Cultural Values

Conflict management is being analyzed by having two axis cooperativeness and assertiveness (Blake and Mouton, 1964) where Individual with high level assertiveness will compete to win the situation, high in cooperativeness lead individual to accommodate himself to situation. It is evident that nation which is self sufficient and economically strong will have Individualistic tendency and more assertive and always tend to use competitive styles of management when compared to nations

which collectivistic in nature, where they go even for third party Intervention. Since India have economic disparity among the nation.

H5 Individuals from states who have high economic growth may have competitive styles of management and will perceive conflict by taking task rather than emotional aspects

H6 Individuals from states who have low economic growth may have accommodative styles of management and tend to perceive conflict by taking emotions rather than task aspects.

The agriculture profession in India in the past days rooted the sense of Collectivism among Indians. Individual with collectivist tendency always prefer to work in group and seeks the social identity, always prefer to be accommodative. But here since the states have higher economic growth through agricultural production and because of modern techniques it can be hypothesized

H7 Individuals from states who have high economic growth because of agriculture may have Cooperative styles of management when compare to the states which have high economic growth because of modernization Implications:

Since this study gives much importance to intra cultural diversity, from research point of view it may be helpful to derive few new variables that are being practiced by the sub cultures which can be found in later stages as either moderating or mediating variables. The reason behind is that the awareness level of the people are varying from state to state as their exposure level and sources varies in the new environment. For practitioners, this research may give an idea about the importance of continuous monitoring over cultural aspects as it is playing major role in influencing organizational values, where value alignment for company seems to be a continuous process.

Conclusion:

The study has its limitations. It is limited in its scope by taking only the economic parameters as the main factor in classifying the states but there are other parameters on which the states can be classified under the variables discussed, like institutional factors, historical background, social institutions. Secondly this study has not taken the other variables like gender, generation gap, nature of work, Industrial type etc. Nevertheless this study may pave the way for further empirical study of above hypothesis, which in turn may give an idea about values that are being possessed by Individuals from different states, how the value orientation really happens in organization, industry wise as each industry has different type of values like Customer related values, manufacturing related values.

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