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Getting The Job Done: Moderating Conflict In Culturally Diverse Teams

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GETTING THE JOB DONE: MODERATING CONFLICT IN CULTURALLY DIVERSE TEAMS

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Conflict literature reveals that team diversity influences team member satisfaction mediated through affective conflict. This research proposal argues that the team diversity and affective conflict reduction (TDACR) model can moderate the negative influence of affective conflict by introducing a moderating variable, team ontology, which measures team functionality and member role comprehension. This proposal recommends collecting data from a culturally diverse airplane manufacturing plant, which utilizing teams that perform routine and non-routine tasks to test the hypotheses. The leadership implications of the TDACR model suggest increasing team ontology or decreasing team diversity to maintain positive levels of team member satisfaction.

INTRODUCTION

The presence of teams within organizations is growing because of their flexibility and potential for significant productivity (Joshi, 2006; Stewart, Manz, & Sims, 1999). Globalization is increasing the level of heterogeneity within organizations (Grensing-Pophal, 2002). These organizational trends require leadership to prepare for and respond to the detrimental outcomes associated with affective conflict so that leaders can assist their culturally diversified teams to get the job done.

Conflict management researchers concur that conflict managed improperly results in increased hostility, loss of energy, decline in morale, stifled cooperation, detrimental behavior, mistrust, poor decision making, and decreased productivity (Ohbuchi & Suzuki, 2003; Amason, Thompson, Hochwarter, & Harrison, 1995; Lippitt, 1982). As a result, people traditionally consider conflict an undesirable and unavoidable interpersonal dynamic to be eliminated (Shelton & Darling, 2004; Ohbuchi & Suzuki; Kolb & Putnam, 1992). In contrast, effectively managed conflict results in productive verbal exchanges, improved problem solving, increased participation, organizational growth, improved relationships, innovation, and increased productivity (Shelton & Darling; Amason et al.; Shockley-Zalabak 1984; Lippitt). Thus, the functionality of managing conflict within teams requires careful scrutiny to extricate the beneficial outcomes and to discard the detrimental outcomes.

Rahim argued conflict management "involves designing effective strategies to minimize the dysfunctions of conflict and maximize the constructive functions of conflict in order to enhance learning and effectiveness" (2000: 5). Thus, the role of the leader in managing conflict is not to eliminate conflict; rather, the role of the leader is to minimize the negative effects of conflict and to accentuate its positive effects so that learning transpires (Rahim; Deutsch, 1973; see also Klenke, 2003). However, Lewicki, Weiss, and Lewin (1992) cautioned that not every conflict is manageable and produces win-win scenarios. Lewicki's et al. concern elucidates the difficulties in managing affective conflict which researchers consider the most destructive type of interpersonal conflict (Rahim, 2002; Jehn, 1995). Researchers argue the necessity of maintaining low levels of affective intragroup conflict to overt destructive outcomes (Rahim; Jehn); however, increased diversity within teams elevates the level of affective conflict (Jehn & Chatman, 2000; Jehn, Northcraft, & Neale, 1999; Jehn, Chadwick, & Thatcher, 1997). Thus, the research problem is that team diversity escalates affective conflict and produces destructive team outcomes.

Minimal research exists offering leadership strategies to prevent the detrimental affects of affective conflict in diversified teams; however, task conflict increased to levels higher than affective conflict diminishes negative affective conflict outcomes such as decreased team member satisfaction (Rahim, 2002; Jehn & Mannix, 2001; Jehn, 1995). An approach to maintain a high level of task conflict within a team is to ensure team members exclusively interact when task completion is essential. Thus, team ontology, which refers to the reason team members interact and to the amount of role ambiguity, becomes a viable strategy to maintain moderate to high levels of task conflict within teams to offset the negative consequences of affective conflict. Accordingly, this research proposal offers (a) a review of conflict literature to establish the theoretical basis of the affective conflict reduction model and operationalize key terms, (b) essential hypotheses addressing salient variable relationships, (c) a visual depiction of the conceptual model and the descriptions of the variables, (d) a viable research methodology with support for the methodology, (e) an explanation of variable analyses, and (f) the leadership implications of the model.

Conceptual Framework

This paper proposes a model to assist leaders in reducing affective conflict within teams; thus, operationalizing the term "team" precedes the discussion of conflict within teams. Researchers assert that differentiating a group from a team is a tenuous endeavor because "it is impossible to clearly determine the point where a group becomes a team" (Stewart et al., 1999). Subsequently, this paper utilizes the terms group and team interchangeably; furthermore, these terms refer to a collection of individuals who are interdependent and accomplish inter-reliant tasks to produce a good or a service (Stewart et al.; Tuckman, 1965). Therefore, the conflict under discussion is intragroup (i.e., within a group) conflict rather than intergroup conflict, which refers to conflict between two separate groups or teams (Rahim, 2002).

Conflict theorists offer a myriad of definitions for the term

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"conflict" resulting in the absence of a generally accepted definition (Thomas, 1992). However, most researchers emphasize how real or perceived differences between two or more parties produce conflict (Barki & Hartwick, 2004; Rahim, 2002; Kolb & Putnam, 1992; Lippitt, 1982). Rahim argued that conflict occurs when (a) circumstances necessitate participation in an activity oppositional to a party's needs or desires; (b) a party's preferred activities are incongruent with the implantation of an opposing party's preferred activities; (c) one party's acquisition of a scarce resource negates another party's acquisition of the same resource resulting in dissatisfaction; (d) one party's enactment of "attitudes, values, skills, and goals" (2002: 207) excludes another party's perceived enactment of those same aspirations; (e) two conjoining parties express opposing behavioral preferences; and (f) two interdependent parties perform mutual roles or activities.

Rahim stipulated that "conflict can relate to incompatible preferences, goals, and not just activities . . . . [I]n order for conflict to occur, it has to exceed the threshold level of intensity before parties experience (or become aware of) any conflict" (2002: 207). In other words, a breach must occur in the threshold level of intensity for the individual or group to experience conflict. This threshold level varies within individuals and groups. Rahim's insights are congruent with Barki and Hartwick's (2004) notion that conflict germinates when an enactment causes a party to experience a negative emotion.

Thomas (1976) clarified the process of conflict by introducing four elements (a) frustration, (b) conceptualization, (c) behavior, and (d) outcome. The onset of conflict occurs when a party ostensibly frustrates the satisfaction of the other party. Frustration causes one or both parties to conceptualize the conflict. According to Thomas, conceptualization may be a conscious or subconscious activity whereby one or both parties ascribe meaning to the frustration and develop potential recourses with their respective plausible outcomes. Furthermore, during the conceptualization phase, the conflicting parties consider the possible results of their actions in contrast to the degree of satisfaction that each party may experience.

Subsequent to the conceptualization phase, the parties enter the behavior phase of the process in which they select one of five approaches to manage the interpersonal conflict. Thomas' (1976) five approaches of managing conflict are a reinterpretation of Blake and Mouton's (1967; 1964) conceptual scheme in their managerial grid where individuals choose varying degrees of satisfying self and others. The five approaches of managing conflict are (a) competition, (b) avoidance, (c) accommodation, (d) sharing, and (d) collaboration. Further discussion of these approaches is beyond the scope of this paper.

Synthesizing Thomas' (1976) conceptual scheme of conflict with Rahim's (2002) descriptive account, conflict further may be reduced into three primary forms: (a) affective, (b) process, and (c) task. Affective conflict refers to an individual's emotions, feelings, and relationships. The terms, affective and relational, are interchangeable terms for emotive-based conflict. Affective conflict is an "inconsistency in interpersonal relationships, which occurs when organizational members become aware that their feelings and emotions regarding some of the issues are incompatible" (Rahim, 2002: 210). Process conflict refers to how a task is accomplished (i.e. procedures, methods, assignments, timelines, etc.). Task conflict refers to what is accomplished. Researchers frequently utilize task and cognitive conflict interchangeably (Amason & Sapienza, 1997).

Jehn (1995) explored the benefits and detriments of intragroup conflict and found as affective conflict increased, members' positive perceptions of their groups decreased. Additionally, as affective conflicts continued to escalate, members became psychologically distressed and, as a result, engaged in vile language and harsh behavior toward other group members.

Amason's (1996) study parallels Jehn's (1995) findings because he reported that as affective conflict increased the decision quality and the affective willingness of group members to accept the group's decision drastically decreased (see also Rau, 2005). Jehn and Chatman (2000) discovered similar patterns when comparing affective conflict to task and process conflict. Whenever affective conflict was proportionately higher than task and process conflict, the members of a group experienced low levels of commitment, cohesiveness, satisfaction, and performance. Similarly, Jehn et al. (1997) discovered that affective conflict decreased group members' satisfaction and performance.

The specific type of diversity within teams serves a significant function concerning the production of affective conflict. The diversity features most deterministic to stimulate affective conflict are visible characteristics such as culture and gender (Pelled, 1996). Intragroup diversity intensifies the injurious relational dynamics associated with affective conflict when multiculturalism increases (Glinow, Shapiro, & Brett, 2004; Pelled, Eisenhardt, & Xin, 1999). This affective dynamic amplifies when group members reside in communities where they perceive significant intercultural conflict (Brief, Umphress, Dietz, Burrows, Butz, & Scholten, 2005). Furthermore, utilizing unfamiliar verbal and nonverbal communication techniques (Ayoko, Hartel, & Callan, 2002) and espousing diverse values (Jehn et al., 1999) heightens affective conflict and member dissatisfaction. Diverse values and communication techniques are common features of members from differing cultures (Pelled et al.). However, studies examining the affect of gender on escalating intragroup conflict produced mixed results (Jehn et al.; Pelled et al.). Thus, the term "team diversity" refers to the amount of cultural diversity within a team or workgroup. This relationship between team diversity and affective conflict leads to the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1 (H1): There will be a positive relationship between team diversity and affective conflict.

The level of affective conflict during intragroup exchanges is not a static feature (Jehn & Mannix, 2001); rather, it is fluid and fluctuates according to the amount of task conflict present (Jehn & Chatman, 2000; Amason & Sapienza; 1997) and the

presence of deadlines (Jehn & Mannix). Therefore, when assigning a value to affective conflict, comparing the amount of affective conflict to the amount of task conflict is essential because these forms of conflict are interdependent (Jehn & Chatman).

Task conflict rises and falls in direct proportion to issues a team confronts; thus, team members must be aware when task conflict ebbs so that affective conflict does not become proportionately higher than task conflict. Poor group performance acutely aggravates this delicate tension between task and affective conflict and increases affective conflict (Amason & Mooney, 1999); thus, implying affective conflict is a self-perpetuating dynamic.

A plausible solution to reduce levels of affective conflict below levels of task conflict is for leadership to raise the level of task conflict by focusing on problem solving or developing objectives to fulfill team goals (Zander, 1994). Hunger and Stern's (1976) research supports this approach citing members overlooked the negative emotions associated with affective conflict as long as the team's task or mission remains preeminent for team members; however, when the team completes the task, affective conflict reemerges and causes considerable distress within team members.

Researchers concur that maintaining low levels of affective conflict is essential if workgroups desire to glean the positive outcomes associated with conflict while minimizing the negative effects of affective conflict (Amason et al., 1995). Numerous studies cite such undesirable byproducts of affective conflict as group disharmony (Li & Hambrick, 2005; Jehn & Chatman, 2000; Jehn et al., 1997), dissatisfaction (Jehn & Chatman; Jehn, 1995), impaired judgment (Xin & Pelled, 2003), perceived poor workgroup performance (Mohammed & Angell, 2004), and poor work products (Li & Hambrick; Jehn & Chatman; Amason, 1996). The intensity of these outcomes depends on the severity of the affective conflict.

Frequently, researchers divide conflict into two broad types: affective or task; however, Jehn and Chatman (2000) offer a third type of conflict - process conflict. Jehn and Chatman submit as process conflict increases to levels proportionately higher than task and affective conflict, the members of the workgroup experience low levels of commitment, cohesiveness, satisfaction, and performance. Furthermore, Jehn and Chatman's research findings imply that both process and affective conflict have similar negative workgroup outcomes when they increase to levels proportionately higher than the levels of the corresponding task conflict.

Task conflict surfaces "when two or more organizational members disagree on their task or content issues" (Rahim, 2002: 210). Thus, task conflict refers to what is accomplished or is the problem (Jehn et al., 1997). Conflict management researchers differentiate between routine and non-routine task conflict because they do not produce similar outcomes. Jehn (1995) observes moderate-to-high levels of routine task conflict are counterproductive to group functionality; in contrast, moderate levels of non-routine task conflict are beneficial to conflicting parties' outcomes (De Dreu, 2006; Rahim; Amason et al., 1995), particularly interdependent groups (Janssen, Van De Vliert, & Veenstra, 1999). Because of the focus, the remainder of this paper truncates references of non-routine task conflict to task conflict.

Jehn and Chatman (2000) postulated that when task conflict is proportionately higher than process and affective conflict, groups experience higher levels of commitment, cohesiveness, satisfaction, and performance (see also Jehn, 1994); however, if the levels of affective conflict are higher in comparison to the level of task conflict, the benefits of task conflict diminish. Furthermore, when task and affective conflict are at low levels, the group experiences high levels of commitment, cohesiveness, and satisfaction; however, group performance is not increased (Jehn & Chatman). Subsequently, an absence of moderate-to-high levels of task conflict is not beneficial to group performance (Jehn & Chatman). In contrast, when moderate amounts of task conflict are present, group members are more amenable to open discussion, critical evaluation, and the removal of complacency (Jehn, 1995). These qualities stimulate creative solutions to complicated issues; however, Jehn cautioned that if task conflict escalates to extremely high levels, then the amount of conflicting information may overwhelm group members so that they lose sight of their goal.

Amason (1996) explored the implications of task conflict more deeply by proposing task conflict increases the quality of the group's decision and the members' understanding of the decision; however, Amason warned against damage to interpersonal relationships if task conflict evolves into affective conflict. This transference explains "why decision quality, consensus, and affective acceptance appear to have such difficulty coexisting" (Amason, 1996: 141; see also Knight et al., 1999; Eron, 1997). Maximizing task conflict benefits in order to generate the best solutions for a given problem does not foster group consensus; rather, it discourages consensus (Knight et al.). Therefore, teams are wise to guard against the transference and the development of affective conflict during problem solving and decision-making processes.

Team ontology refers to the essential activities teams and their respective members perform as perfunctory to their existence. These activities represent why teams exist; thus, combining the term "ontology" with the term "team" is fitting. Accordingly, team ontology integrates the strengths of task conflict by synergizing the concepts of team functionality and role comprehension (Stewart et al., 1999), thus encouraging team members to focus on tasks so that task conflict is elevated above affective conflict levels (figure 1). High team ontology means team members meet to exchange ideas when task conflicts (i.e., non-routine problems) arise but work independently when task conflicts are absent. In contrast, low team ontology means members frequently interact when tasks are routine. Furthermore, high team ontology emphasizes the criticality of members clearly understanding their team's mission and their individual roles to complete the mission. In contrast, low team ontology emphasizes that team members express significant role equivocality.

Finally, team member satisfaction refers to a member's overall satisfaction with the team. Specifically, team member satisfaction refers to a member's (a) desire to remain part of the team, (b) level of pleasure working with other team members, and (c) level of commitment to the team.

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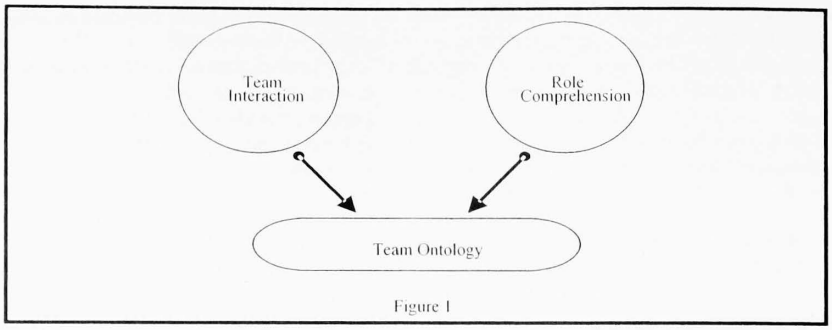

Figure 1

Based on these theoretical underpinnings and variable descriptions, these additional two hypotheses emerge and warrant exploration.

Hypothesis 2 (H2): There will be a negative relationship between affective conflict and team member satisfaction.

Hypothesis 3 (H3): Team ontology will moderate the relationship between affective conflict and team member satisfaction, such that the negative relationship will be stronger under conditions of lower team ontology.

Model Description

The team diversity and affective conflict reduction (TDACR) model integrates four variables for the purpose of guiding leaders how to reduce the negative consequences associated with elevated levels of affective conflict by introducing team ontology. Team ontology functions as a moderating variable to increase the team's level of task conflict above its level of affective conflict so that team member satisfaction does not lessen (figure 2).

The TDACR model reveals the causal relationship between team diversity (i.e., the independent variable) and team member satisfaction (i.e., the dependent variable) as mediated by affective conflict. Following Baron and Kenny, affective conflict "represents the generative mechanism through which the focal independent variable is able to influence the dependent variable of interest" (1986: 1173). Furthermore, "Mediators explain how physical events take on internal psychological significance" (Baron & Kenny, 1986: 1176; see also Kerlinger & Lee, 2000). In this instance, as team diversity increases, then the aggregate level of affective conflict increases, which produces a decrease in team member satisfaction.

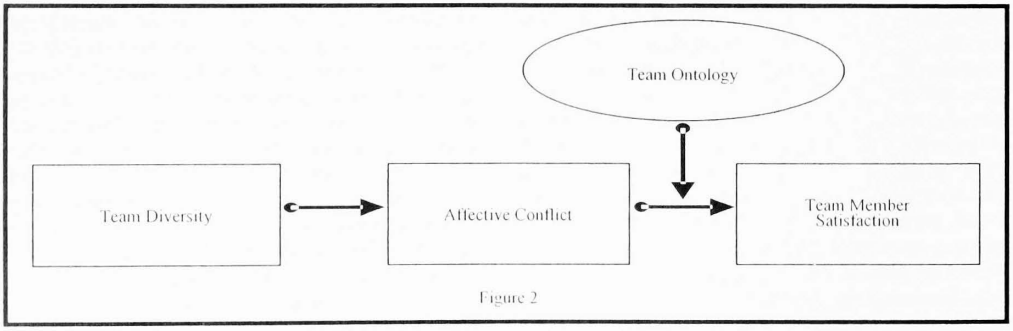

Figure 2

The moderating variable, team ontology, is a quantitative type of moderator (Baron & Kenny, 1986) indicating the level of task conflict introduced between the predictor variable (i.e., affective conflict) and criterion variable (i.e., team member satisfaction). Baron and Kenny note that mediating variables can "shift roles from effects to causes, depending on the focus of the analysis" (1986: 1174). In this instance, affective conflict assumes the role of the independent variable. Team ontology moderates the level of team member satisfaction. When team ontology is high (i.e., team members only interact when addressing a task conflict and team members clearly understand and function within their roles), the aggregate levels of affective conflict produced from team diversity can increase without a negative influence upon team member satisfaction because the team's task conflict has increased to comparably higher levels. However, when team ontology is low (i.e., team members meet without an explicit task and with role equivocality), present levels of affective conflict caused by team diversity produce a decrease in team member satisfaction. These results agree with Baron and Kenny's description of a moderating variable "which partitions a focal independent variable into subgroups that establish its domains of maximal

effectiveness in regard to a given dependent variable" (1986: 1173; see also Mitchell & Jolley, 2007).

Methodology

The proposed sample for this study includes participants from an airplane manufacturing plant in the Midwest. The manufacturing plant employs approximately 1,000 employees who work in teams. The sample is a cross-section of all employees working in teams. Rationale supporting the selection of this plant for the study is because cultural minorities comprise approximately 40% of the workforce. Furthermore, the manufacturing plant is a mixed matrix corporation exhibiting traits from both defender and prospector organizations (Miles & Snow, 1978). Accordingly, some teams perform routine tasks such as assembly teams; in contrast, other teams perform non-routine tasks such as research and design teams. Thus, the sample provides a rich environment to examine the independent variable, team diversity, and the moderating variable, team ontology, because of significant cultural diversity and the performance of routine and non-routine tasks.

The large sample size, approximately 1,000 participants, is essential because scholars argue a significantly limiting factor when analyzing for moderating relationships is the difficulty obtaining adequate statistical power (Villa, Howell, Dorfman, & Daniel, 2002). Increasing the sample size is a viable approach to increase the statistical power so that statistically significant relationships are discernable (Villa et al.). However, large samples necessitate a data collection method capable of obtaining large amounts of information in a timely manner. Surveys accomplish this objective (Mitchell & Jolley, 2007; Kerlinger & Lee, 2000).

To ease the distribution of the instruments to measure the four variables of the TDACR model in a large sample, the researcher plans to distribute, in person, one general survey that includes each measure's set of questions to increase the economy of data collection (Kerlinger & Lee, 2000). The researcher plans to meet with the organization's leadership to secure support for employee compliance to complete the survey. This approach alleviates the serious limitation of low return rates associated with surveys (Mitchell & Jolley, 2007; Kerlinger & Lee). In addition, the researcher plans to instruct the organization's leadership to provide a quiet and private location where participants can complete and remit the survey without distractions or external pressures. Finally, the survey does not solicit the participant's name to ensure anonymity. These precautious reduce the common threats associated with survey completion (Mitchell & Jolley; Kerlinger & Lee).

The proposed measures for this study examine the four TDACR model variables. Team diversity is the first variable in the TDACR model. A tested and profitable measurement of team diversity is the entropy-based index (Teachman, 1980). This index combines categorical variables to provide an aggregate team diversity score. Several prominent conflict and workgroup diversity scholars (Jehn et al., 1999; Pelled et al., 1999; Jehn et al., 1997) have utilized this index in their studies of team diversity, conflict, and performance. The entropy-based index is advantageous for this study because a brief questionnaire soliciting each participant's culture is economical. Furthermore, the entropy-based index provides a numerical value that reflects the level of team diversity. Higher values indicate greater team diversity. Another factor affecting the entropy-based index is the size of the team (i.e., the number of members). A larger team has the potential to produce a higher index score compared to a smaller team because larger teams allow for greater heterogeneity (i.e., the number of cultures represented). Thus, both cultural diversity and the size of the team (i.e., the overall number of cultures present) influence the entropy-based index score.

A frequently used measurement of affective conflict is the intragroup conflict scale Jehn (1994) developed. This instrument utilizes a 5-point Likert scale. The portion of the instrument that measures affective conflict demonstrated Cronbach alphas ranging from .90 to .94 in three studies (Jehn & Mannix, 2001; Jehn et al., 1999; Jehn, 1995). The intragroup conflict scale is profitable for this study because of its successful and economical usage in comparable studies.

A reliable instrument to measure team member satisfaction is the Kunin faces scale (Kunin, 1955). Jehn et al. (1999) incorporated a 5-point Likert scale question soliciting team member satisfaction that complements the Kunin faces scale. Slightly modifying the question for this study's purposes results in the following query: "How satisfied are you working in this team?" Jehn's et al. study demonstrated Cronbach alphas of .85 for both the Kunin faces scale and the accompanying 5-point Likert scale question. This approach to measuring team member satisfaction provides a simplistic, proven, and an economical means to acquire the necessary information from a large sample.

Currently, there is not an instrument to measure team ontology; however, several 5-point Likert scale questions (e.g., 1 = "Not at all" and 5 = "Very") soliciting the frequency of team member interaction exclusively for task purposes and the level of team member role unequivocalness gather the necessary information. Furthermore, this research proposal encourages utilizing a pilot test to assess these questions for construct validity and reliability. Adjustments to the questions are necessary if the construct validity and reliability indices are below desirable thresholds. This measurement is appropriate because of its economy and ability to integrate a team ontology score into a regressive statistical analysis.

Finally, the proposed data analysis for this study is two-fold. First, the mediating portion of the model requires a design concurrent with Baron and Kenny's (1986) description of assessing mediating relationships. First, regress affective conflict (i.e., mediating variable) on team diversity (i.e., independent variable). Second, regress team member satisfaction (i.e., dependent variable) on team diversity. Third, regress team member satisfaction on both team diversity and affective conflict. Mediation exists if (a) team diversity positively affects affective conflict, (b) team diversity negatively affects team member satisfaction, and (c) affective conflict negatively affects team member satisfaction. This test of mediation assesses the veracity of H1 and H2.

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Second, the moderating portion of the model interfaces the moderating variable, team ontology, with the influence between affective conflict and team member satisfaction. Measuring for moderation of two continuous variables necessitates the researcher to predict the influence of the moderating variable (e.g., linear, quadratic, and step) upon the relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable (Baron & Kenny, 1986). In this instance, the researcher anticipates a step relationship between affective conflict and team member satisfaction because of the moderating influence of team ontology. The rational for this relationship is because low levels of team member satisfaction occur as affective conflict increases to levels higher than task conflict. Team ontology incorporates the salient features of task conflict. Thus, the researcher anticipates the moderating influence of team ontology will produce a step relationship between affective conflict and team member satisfaction. Lastly, Baron and Kenny prescribe dichotomizing the moderating variable where the step occurs and then performing a regressive study. This test of moderation assesses the veracity of H3.

Implications

The proposed research study of the TDACR model seriously considers the implication of leadership's responsibility to employee satisfaction. Because of the increasing interest in employee development and job satisfaction revealed in leadership theories such as servant leadership (Greenleaf, 1977), developmental leadership, and supportive leadership, providing team ontology to moderate the damaging effects of heightened affective conflict on employee satisfaction is advantageous. Leaders managing highly diversified teams experiencing the detrimental outcomes associated with high levels of affective conflict can lessen these undesirable outcomes by limiting team member exchanges to non-routine task interactions and clearly explicating the role of each team member. In addition, when teams require constant interaction in both routine and non-routine task projects, leaders can choose to reduce the team's amount of cultural diversity so that the team's level of affective conflict decreases to healthy levels, thus, matching team diversity with team ontology. The crucial implication for leaders is to monitor signs of affective conflict such as team member dissatisfaction. If affective conflict levels rise to unhealthy levels, then leadership can (a) reduce team member interaction to complex tasks, (b) increase team member's role clarity, and (c) decrease team diversity.

Conclusion

Organizational leadership increasingly uses culturally diverse teams. This usage elevates levels of affective conflict within these teams. Elevated levels of affective conflict produce detrimental outcomes such as decreased member satisfaction. One factor that affects the level of affective conflict within teams is the level of team diversity, specifically cultural diversity. As team diversity increases, the level of affective conflict increases. Task conflict increased to a level higher than the level of affective conflict reduces the negative effects of affective conflict.

Minimal research exists offering viable strategies for leaders to increase task conflict within teams. Team ontology, which integrates concepts from team formation and member role comprehension, may moderate the aggregate level of affective conflict by increasing the level of task conflict. Team ontology refers to the level of team member interaction during tasks and members' understanding of their roles within the functionality of the team.

The TDACR model offers team ontology as a moderating variable to reduce the negative outcomes produced by team diversity. Affective conflict mediates the effect of team diversity upon team satisfaction. Proven and advantageous instruments exist to measure the mediating relationship between these three principle variables (i.e., team diversity, affective conflict, and team member satisfaction). However, a proven instrument to measure the moderating variable, team ontology, does not exist. Thus, designing and pilot testing a Likert scale questionnaire to solicit team member's reasons for interaction and amount of role equivocality is necessary.

Finally, the TDACR model suggests leaders maintain positive team member satisfaction by influencing a healthy level of affective conflict through increasing team ontology or decreasing team diversity. In addition, the TDACR model empowers leaders to mitigate the destructive effects of conflict such as reductions in team productivity and performance.

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