The Relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Conflict Management Styles among Teachers

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Abstract

The aim of this study was to examine the relationship between emotional intelligence (EI) and conflict management styles among high school teachers, and identified the styles of teachers’ conflict management. 108 teachers went through a quantitative study during the year 2012. Data was gathered by two questionnaires, “Siberia Shrink” for EI, and “Robbins” for conflict management styles. Data was analyzed by descriptive and inferential statistics, including mean, Kalmogorov -Smirnov, Pearson correlation. The results of Pearson Product Moment correlation revealed that conflict management styles had significant and positive relationship with emotional intelligence and cooperation (mean =3/01) style was the most prominent conflict–handling style among teachers.

Keywords: Conflict, conflict management, emotional intelligence,

1. Introduction

Today, the societies enjoy more diversities and differences than any other time of the human history. For, the present individuals while interacting among themselves and others differ from the physical, mental, also, beliefs, values, interests, and characteristics points of view (Rahim, 2001) and for this reason, we will face conflicts. Due to the complexity, development of communications and interactions in educational environments, the appearance of conflicts are inevitable. Therefore, if these discrepancies are not solved in proportion to managerial control and in a correct way, then they would cause lots of stress, mental disorders, and decrease in job satisfaction, turnover, and the emergent of moral issues. There is a positive relationship between conflict and job stress and many researches confirm
The conflict management possesses many styles and various techniques which have been developed through years. Out of five methods of settling conflicts: integrating, competing, obliging, avoiding and compromising, two of these namely integrating and compromising dominate the other methods, for, they provide all the groups’ desires. Among all the other techniques, negotiation is the best (Halenback, 2010). Negotiation is an emotional interaction. It is so important for negotiators to be able to evaluate their own emotions and feelings decently (Golman, 2002). Therefore, one can recognize that the role of emotional intelligence is of a great importance, for, it contains a collection of verbal and non-verbal competencies which empowers the individual to articulate, identify, understand, and evaluate his/her feelings and others’ in order to come to an agreement in critical moments. Individuals with a high degree of emotional intelligence are able to identify certain emotions and excitements in them and others and apply it to direct the others' thoughts and doings. The emotional intelligence contributes in controlling one's feelings and excitements and deal with the others’ emotions (Golman, 2002). Hence, those who possess a high degree of emotional intelligence are successful negotiators. The emotional intelligence consists of five sections: self-awareness, self-control, empathy, relation management, and social skills which all are required competencies and effective in conflict management. The different aspects of emotional intelligence are the vital factor in a successful schooling. Also, it is very effective on the classroom leadership, decision making, communications, group working, creativity and innovation, to attract parents trust, which has been emphasized and approved in Malek(2000), Lee Fan Ming(2003), Rahim(2001), Baker(2002), and Kimbal and Scot(2004) researches. Malek(2000) indicated that there has been a positive relation between the method of integration and the emotional intelligence and it has a negative correlation with the style of avoidance and adaptation in which there is no difference between men and women (Morrison, 2005). Kimbal and Scot (2004) have found out that there is a significant relation between the various styles of conflict and emotional intelligence. In another research, Rahim (2001) has studied on the relation between emotional intelligence and the strategies of conflict management in seven countries: Greece, China, Bangladesh, Hong Kong, Macao, Poland, and South Africa. His researches show that there is a positive correlation between the emotional intelligence and effective strategies in problem solving. The profession of teaching and the educational environments, with respect to the importance of it in various societies, has been in the center of notice of the scholars of behavioral studies and psychologists. They believe the current conflict between teachers and students has always been one of the obstacles on the way of a suitable classroom...
management (Diamond, 1992) which is one of the most important reasons in teachers' turnover (Ingersole, Smith, 2003). Also, the repeated disagreements and conflicts between teachers and students have led to creating stress and job weariness among experienced teachers. The researches show that to create and maintain a dynamic and positive environment in the classrooms is dependent on the constructive approaches that the teachers select to deal with the situations which require teachers' strategies to maximize the students' contributions (Kauffman et al, 2005).

Having conflict does not only belong to the classroom zone, Greaves, (2005), has pointed to the conflict between the teachers and school managers too. He believes the teachers' disagreement with managers' policies and the lack of experienced teachers' cooperation with young managers is one of the most important reasons in creating the mentioned conflicts. (Greaves, 2005) Webster (2011) suggests that the conflict between teachers and parents is the most important challenge which nowadays teachers confront it and could lead to a destructive consequence. (Webster, 2011) Although many researchers' findings emphasize the relation between emotional intelligence and the styles of conflict management, the lack of such kind of researches and especially in educational environments is so obvious. For the culture factor and the conditions of work environment has a great and undeniable role on the selection of the conflict management style through individuals. For instance, Lee Fan Ming (2003), in his researches on the university faculty found out that although there is a positive relation between emotional intelligence and conflict management, it is the avoidance style in solving the conflicts which is preferable in Taiwan. (Lee, 2003) For in Taiwan, it is still the using of old and traditional culture which are emphasized for establishing the peace and preventing the problems in communicating. Therefore, the results of these researches in different countries and especially in sensitive and conflicting environments such as educational organizations and teaching profession should be considered closely. Hence, with regard to the importance of the issue, this paper studies one of the most important and essential issues which the schools face. In this study, there are two purposes: Firstly, the study of the effect of emotional intelligence on conflict management and secondly, the cognition of how the teachers can handle the conflicts and their priorities in applying the styles of conflict management.
2. Method

This research, from the purpose point of view is applicable and from the way of gathering the data is in description-correlation group. It was done in the second half of the year 1390, in 18 district of education in Tehran. The statistical population consist of 102 high school teachers of the mentioned district which were chosen as accessible sampling. 62 teachers out of 102 had a bachelor degree, 26 had a master degree. The rest did not answer to the question of what their degrees were. Out of 102 teachers, 6 had less than 5-year job experiences, 10 had job experience between 5-10 years, 32 between 10-15 years, and 48 of them had experience more than 15 years. 6 did not answer the question. For collecting information, two close ended questionnaires have been used which the respondents through marking in one of the squares, which has been organized based on Likert scale, represent their responds. For the studying of conflict management styles, the Robins questionnaires (1998) (Robins, 2000) which its reliability based on Kron Bach Alpha was 81%, was used. For measuring the emotional intelligence, the Siberia Shirring questionnaire which its reliability based on Koran Bach was 84%, has been used. For the analyzing the data, the statistic methods of inferential and descriptive, through SPSS software, have been used. In terms of descriptive, it consists: frequency, percent, and diagrams. In terms of inferential statistics, with respect to this fact that the present research follows the assessment of the relationship between suppressor variable and criterion, first the Smirnov-Kolmogorov test was used and due to the normality of data, the Pearson correlation test has been used.

3. Findings

The achieved results through using Pearson correlation represent a positive and significant relation between emotional intelligence and conflict management. Pearson coefficient of correlation of the mentioned relation is (r=0/29) which is gained significant (0/003) that is smaller than significant (0/01)(p<0/01). Therefore, it could be stated that with 99% of assurance, there is a positive relation between emotional intelligence and conflict management which means that the emotional intelligence of individuals affect their quality of dissolving disagreements and the styles of conflict managements.

The style of cooperation has the highest average with (3/01) and this means that the teachers prefer this method over others. For in settling the disagreements, every opinion is considered important and one is after the real agreement. The other styles namely: competition,
compromise, moderateness, and avoidance are the other preferences respectively which teachers choose for removing conflicts. Teachers prefer the style of cooperation over the other styles of conflict management.

4. Conclusion

The findings of the current research indicate that the emotional intelligence of teachers affects the quality of their management and disagreement solution and conflicts in their work environment. The role and effect of emotional intelligence over conflict management has been strongly emphasized in various researches and studies. Kimball and Scot (2004) examined the relationship between the styles of conflict management and emotional intelligent over 739 employees from the seven districts in East of The United States. They concluded that there is a significant relation between the various styles of conflict management and emotional intelligence (Kimball, Scot, 2004). Also, Lee Fan Ming (2003) and Farzadnia (2010) found a positive correlation between emotional intelligence and conflict management.

In the present study, also, it has been recognized that the teachers prefer the cooperation style to other styles in order to settle disagreements and this method is preferable over other style that is; those who apply the mentioned style in conflict management, possess a high degree of emotional intelligence comparing to other individuals (Morrison, 2005). The cooperation style due to two dimensions of own desire (self-centeredness) and to care to the others' wishes, possesses a high degree, that is; those teachers who use this style, care both their own desires and others' as well and consider the other individuals' interests. Only in this case, the conflicts and disagreements might be settled. Furthermore, everyone would be satisfied with the offered solution. Consequently, the result of the group team will be improved and the rate of stresses, weakness, feebleness, and turnover will be decreased. Now, the conflicts and the disagreements existed in schools will turn to necessary factors which pave the way for creating innovation, flourishing, and creativity of teachers and students as well.

The results of Lee Fan Ming (2003) on faculty members of a college located in the south of Taiwan indicates that those with high degree of emotional intelligence choose the cooperation style in conflict management (Lee, 2003). Also, in his studies, Malek (2000) points that those with high degree of emotional intelligence choose the cooperation style in conflict
management. These findings are compatible with the results of the mentioned studies. 
(Morrison, 2005)

References


Graves, Kelly.(2005).Conflict in Schools-Principals and Teachers. Available at: http://Ezine Articles.com


Annexure

Table 1. Pearson correlation test between emotional intelligence and conflict management

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>variables</th>
<th>Coefficient of correlation</th>
<th>$R^2$</th>
<th>Sig</th>
<th>the level of significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emotional intelligence</td>
<td></td>
<td>0/29</td>
<td>0/15</td>
<td>0/003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict management</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. The average of teachers' responses to the styles of conflict management

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Traits</th>
<th>Statistic average</th>
<th>Standard error of the mean</th>
<th>Standard deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>cooperation</td>
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<td>0/281</td>
<td>2/842</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>compromise</td>
<td>2/5</td>
<td>0/938</td>
<td>0/846</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>moderateness</td>
<td>2/3</td>
<td>0/834</td>
<td>0/873</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>competition</td>
<td>3/01</td>
<td>0/619</td>
<td>0/625</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>avoidance</td>
<td>2/02</td>
<td>0/941</td>
<td>0/935</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>