

Emotional Intelligence in Conflict Management and Leadership Effectiveness in Organizations

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ABSTRACT

Emotional intelligence (EI) has become an increasingly important topic in the field of organizational behavior, particularly in the areas of conflict management and leadership effectiveness. EI refers to the ability to identify, understand, and manage one's own emotions, as well as the emotions of others. Individuals with high EI are better equipped to navigate complex social interactions, build strong relationships, and effectively manage conflicts.

In the context of conflict management, leaders with high EI are able to de-escalate tense situations, facilitate productive dialogue, and find mutually beneficial solutions. They are also able to effectively manage their own emotions, preventing personal biases from clouding their judgment or exacerbating conflicts. When it comes to leadership effectiveness, research has shown that EI is a critical predictor of success. Leaders with high EI are more likely to inspire trust, communicate effectively, and motivate employees. They are also more adaptable to change, better at managing stress, and able to make decisions that balance the needs of multiple stakeholders. Organizations that prioritize the development of EI among their leaders and employees may see significant benefits in terms of improved communication, reduced conflict, and higher levels of engagement and productivity.

KEYWORDS: Emotional intelligence, Conflict management, Leadership effectiveness, Relationship.

Introduction

In today's complex and rapidly changing business environment, emotional intelligence (EI) has emerged as a critical factor in effective conflict management and leadership. Emotional intelligence refers to the ability to recognize and manage one's own emotions, as well as the emotions of others. In the context of conflict management, emotional intelligence enables leaders to better understand the underlying emotions and motivations of those involved in the conflict, and to develop strategies for resolving the conflict that take into account these emotional factors.

Emotional intelligence (EI) is a critical skill for effective leadership and conflict management in organizations. Leaders who possess high levels of EI are better equipped to navigate complex interpersonal dynamics, build strong relationships, and resolve conflicts. Conflict is an inevitable aspect of organizational life, and effective conflict management requires leaders to understand and manage their emotions and those of their team members. Research has shown that leaders with high levels of emotional intelligence are more successful in managing conflict and achieving their organizational goals. They are better able to empathize with others, communicate effectively, and build trust and collaboration. Additionally, leaders with high levels of emotional intelligence are better equipped to handle stress, maintain composure in challenging situations, and make informed decisions.

This paper will explore the role of emotional intelligence in conflict management and leadership effectiveness in organizations. The first section of the paper will provide an overview of the

concept of emotional intelligence and its relevance to conflict management and leadership. The second section will examine the ways in which emotional intelligence can be applied to conflict management, including the use of empathy, active listening, and effective communication. The third section will explore the relationship between emotional intelligence and leadership effectiveness, with a particular focus on the ability of emotionally intelligent leaders to inspire and motivate their teams.

Statement of the Problem

While there is a growing body of research on the importance of emotional intelligence (EI) in effective leadership and conflict management, there is still a significant gap in our understanding of how to develop and apply EI skills in the workplace. Many organizations struggle to effectively manage conflict and develop leaders who possess the emotional intelligence necessary for success. Additionally, there is a need for more research on the relationship between EI, conflict management, and leadership effectiveness. While there is evidence to suggest that leaders with high levels of EI are more effective at managing conflict and achieving their organizational goals, there is still much to learn about how these skills can be effectively developed and applied in practice. Moreover, there is a need for practical recommendations on how organizations can develop emotional intelligence and conflict management skills among their leaders and employees. Many organizations lack the resources and expertise necessary to design and implement effective training programs, and there is a need for more guidance on best practices in this area. In summary, the problem is that organizations lack the knowledge and resources

necessary to effectively develop emotional intelligence and conflict management skills among their leaders and employees, which limits their ability to manage conflict and achieve their organizational goals.

Research Objectives

The objectives of studying emotional intelligence in conflict management and leadership effectiveness in organizations can be summarized as follows:

1. To understand the role of emotional intelligence in conflict management: The study aims to examine the impact of emotional intelligence on conflict resolution strategies adopted by leaders in organizations. It seeks to explore how emotional intelligence helps in reducing conflicts and creating a more positive work environment.
2. To examine the relationship between emotional intelligence and leadership effectiveness: The study aims to investigate how emotional intelligence influences leadership effectiveness in organizations. It seeks to explore how emotionally intelligent leaders are better equipped to manage their teams, inspire them towards achieving common goals and navigate complex organizational challenges.
3. To identify the factors that promote or inhibit the development of emotional intelligence in leaders: The study aims to identify the factors that contribute to the development or inhibition of emotional intelligence in leaders. It seeks to explore how factors such as organizational culture, training and development programs, and personal characteristics of leaders can impact their emotional intelligence.

4. To suggest strategies for developing emotional intelligence in leaders: The study aims to provide recommendations for developing emotional intelligence in leaders. It seeks to identify effective training and development programs that can help leaders enhance their emotional intelligence skills and improve their overall performance.

2. Conceptual Clarifications

Emotional intelligence (EI) is a term that refers to the ability to recognize, understand, and manage one's own emotions, as well as the emotions of others. It involves the ability to use emotional information to guide thought and behavior, and to adapt to different social situations.

According to Joseph and Newman (2018), emotional intelligence includes four components: perceiving emotions, using emotions to facilitate thinking, understanding emotions, and managing emotions. These components are intertwined and work together to enable individuals to effectively navigate social situations. Perceiving emotions involves being able to accurately identify emotions in oneself and others. Using emotions to facilitate thinking involves using emotional information to enhance cognitive processes, such as problem-solving and decision-making. Understanding emotions involves comprehending complex emotions and the relationships between them. Managing emotions involves regulating one's own emotions and responding appropriately to the emotions of others (Jordan, Ashkanasy, & Härtel, 2019).

Goleman (2017) expanded on this concept and proposed that EI includes five key domains: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. Self-awareness involves recognizing and understanding one's own emotions and their impact on others. Self-regulation

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involves managing one's own emotions in order to achieve goals and maintain positive relationships. Motivation involves using emotions to fuel achievement and goal-setting. Empathy involves understanding and sharing the emotions of others. Social skills involve effectively managing interpersonal relationships and communicating with others. Thus, emotional intelligence is a multifaceted construct that involves the ability to perceive, use, understand, and manage emotions in oneself and others. It is critical to effective social functioning, communication, and leadership.

Emotional Intelligence (EI) is a complex construct that refers to an individual's ability to recognize, understand, and manage their own emotions, as well as the emotions of others. As a cognitive and emotional capacity, EI is thought to involve the integration of multiple cognitive abilities and personality traits. One of the key components of EI is self-awareness, which involves being able to accurately recognize and understand one's own emotions, thoughts, and behaviors. This is important because self-awareness allows individuals to regulate their emotions in a manner that is appropriate for the situation. Research has shown that individuals who possess high levels of self-awareness are better able to regulate their emotions, which results in greater psychological flexibility and resilience (Martínez-Monteaudo, del Mar García-Sánchez, & López-Zafra, 2020).

Pescosolido and Masterson (2018), in a study on emotional intelligence highlighted the key component of EI is empathy, which refers to an individual's ability to understand and share the feelings of others. Empathy involves both cognitive and affective aspects, and it plays a crucial role in social interaction and communication. Individuals who possess high levels of empathy are

more likely to have positive interpersonal relationships, and they are perceived as being more socially skilled.

EI also includes the ability to manage one's emotions effectively, which involves regulating one's own emotional responses in order to achieve personal goals or meet the demands of a particular situation. Self-regulation is critical for successful social interaction, as it enables individuals to behave in a manner that is consistent with social norms and expectations. Research has shown that individuals who possess effective emotion regulation skills are less likely to experience negative emotional states, and they are better equipped to deal with stress and adversity (Singh & Rastogi 2017).

According to Rosete and Ciarrochi (2018), Emotional Intelligence (EI) has the capacity to identify, understand, and manage one's own emotions, as well as to recognize and influence the emotions of others. In the context of conflict management, EI plays a critical role in improving communication, reducing tensions, and fostering collaborative problem-solving. One key aspect of EI in conflict management is self-awareness. This involves being able to recognize and regulate one's own emotional responses, as well as understanding how these responses may impact others. Individuals with high levels of self-awareness are better equipped to remain calm, rational, and focused in challenging situations, which can help de-escalate conflicts and promote positive outcomes.

Another important component of EI in conflict management as stressed by Wong and Law (2018), is empathy. This involves the ability to understand and appreciate the feelings and perspectives

of others, even if they differ from our own. Empathy allows individuals to build rapport and trust with others, which is essential for effective communication and collaboration. EI also involves effective communication skills, including active listening and assertiveness. By actively listening to others and expressing oneself clearly and respectfully, individuals can reduce misunderstandings and promote mutual understanding and respect. Cultivating emotional intelligence skills can be an effective strategy for managing conflicts in a constructive and productive manner.

Leadership Effectiveness

Yukl and Mahsud (2019) clarifies leadership effectiveness as the extent to which a leader is able to achieve the desired outcomes through their leadership behavior and influence on others. It can also be defined as the ability of a leader to motivate, inspire, and guide individuals or groups towards achieving organizational goals. Effective leadership involves a combination of skills, traits, and behaviors that enable a leader to effectively manage people, resources, and tasks. These may include communication skills, emotional intelligence, strategic thinking, adaptability, delegation, decision-making abilities, and the ability to inspire and motivate others. Also, effective leadership is often associated with positive outcomes such as increased productivity, improved employee satisfaction and engagement, higher levels of innovation, and better overall performance of the organization (Zaccaro, Kemp, & Bader, 2019).

According to Kwon, Kim and Lee (2019), Leadership effectiveness can be understood in terms of three main components: the leader, the followers, and the situation.

The Leader: Leadership effectiveness is influenced by the characteristics and qualities of the leader. These may include traits such as emotional intelligence, adaptability, decisiveness, integrity, and vision, as well as skills such as communication, problem-solving, and strategic thinking. Effective leaders are those who are able to effectively leverage their strengths and minimize their weaknesses to inspire and guide their followers towards achieving organizational goals.

The Followers: Leadership effectiveness also depends on the characteristics and needs of the followers. Effective leaders are those who are able to understand and fulfill the needs of their followers while empowering them to achieve their full potential. This may involve providing support, recognition, feedback, and opportunities for growth and development.

The Situation: Finally, leadership effectiveness is influenced by the situational context in which the leader operates. Effective leaders are those who are able to adapt their style and approach to different situations and challenges. They are able to identify and address the specific needs and challenges of the organization, the team, and the individual followers, and create a supportive and empowering environment that enables everyone to succeed. Leadership effectiveness is a complex and multifaceted concept that involves a combination of personal qualities, skills, and behaviors, as well as an understanding of the needs and dynamics of the followers and the situational context

The Impact of Emotional Intelligence on Conflict Resolution Strategies

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According to Den Hartog, Koopman and Thierry (2018), Emotional intelligence (EI) is the ability to recognize, understand and manage one's own emotions, as well as those of others. Leaders who possess high levels of emotional intelligence are better equipped to handle conflicts in organizations as they can manage their own emotions while also understanding and responding to the emotions of others involved in the conflict.

Here are some ways that emotional intelligence can impact a leader's conflict resolution strategies as emphasized by Den Hartog et al; 2018:

Better communication: Emotionally intelligent leaders are better able to communicate effectively with the parties involved in a conflict. They can listen actively, show empathy, and communicate clearly and assertively to help de-escalate the situation.

More collaborative approach: Leaders who possess high levels of emotional intelligence are more likely to adopt a collaborative and cooperative approach to conflict resolution. They are open-minded, flexible and willing to find a solution that works for everyone involved.

Reduced negative emotions: Emotionally intelligent leaders are better able to regulate their own emotions during conflicts, which can reduce the likelihood of negative emotions such as anger and frustration escalating the situation further.

Increased awareness of nonverbal cues: Leaders with emotional intelligence have an increased awareness of nonverbal cues such as facial expressions and body language. This allows them to

pick up on subtle signs of tension or discomfort and address them before they become major issues.

Empathy: Emotionally intelligent leaders are more empathetic towards others and can put themselves in other people's shoes. This helps them to understand the root causes of the conflict and develop solutions that address those underlying issues. Accordingly, Judge and Piccolo (2019), opined that leaders who possess high levels of emotional intelligence are better equipped to handle conflicts in organizations. They are able to communicate effectively, adopt a collaborative approach, regulate their emotions, and show empathy towards others, all of which contribute to successful conflict resolution. Emotional intelligence plays a crucial role in conflict management because it allows individuals to understand and manage their own emotions, as well as the emotions of others. When conflicts arise, emotions can run high, making it difficult to communicate effectively and reach a resolution. Individuals with high emotional intelligence are better equipped to handle these situations because they can recognize their own emotions and respond appropriately. They are also able to empathize with the other person's perspective and understand their emotions, which can help to de-escalate the conflict.

Additionally, emotional intelligence helps individuals to communicate more effectively by using language that is clear and concise, avoiding blame or criticism, and actively listening to the other person's point of view. This can help to create a more positive and productive dialogue, leading to a quicker resolution of the conflict. Emotional intelligence is an important skill for anyone involved in conflict management, whether in personal or professional settings. By understanding

and managing emotions effectively, individuals can navigate difficult situations with greater ease and achieve more favorable outcomes (Pescosolido & Masterson, 2018).

The Relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Leadership Effectiveness

Emotional intelligence is widely recognized as an important factor in leadership effectiveness. In fact, many studies like that of Zeidner, Roberts and Matthews (2018) have shown that leaders with high levels of emotional intelligence are more successful than those who lack it. Leaders with high emotional intelligence are able to understand and manage their own emotions, as well as the emotions of others. This allows them to communicate effectively, build strong relationships, and inspire and motivate their team members. One of the key ways that emotional intelligence contributes to leadership effectiveness is through better decision-making. When leaders are able to recognize and regulate their emotions, they are less likely to be influenced by biases or make decisions based on unconscious feelings. They are also able to consider the impact of their decisions on others, which can lead to more positive outcomes for everyone involved.

In addition, leaders with high emotional intelligence tend to have a greater level of self-awareness, which allows them to identify their strengths and weaknesses and work towards personal growth and development. This can help them to become more effective leaders over time. In other words, Emotional intelligence is an important characteristic for effective leadership. It allows leaders to build strong relationships, communicate effectively, make better decisions, and inspire and motivate their team members.

Factors that Promote or Inhibit the Development of Emotional Intelligence in Leaders

There are several factors that can promote or inhibit the development of emotional intelligence in leaders. One of such are personality traits, Some personality traits like extraversion, agreeableness, openness, and conscientiousness are associated with higher levels of emotional intelligence, while others like neuroticism are associated with lower levels. Also, Leaders who are self-aware and understand their own emotions are better able to manage them and respond appropriately to the emotions of others. The ability to regulate one's own emotions and manage stress is essential for effective leadership.

Lin, Chen, Huang and Wu (2019) suggested that empathy which is the ability to understand and share the feelings of others is a key component of emotional intelligence. Leaders who possess this trait are better able to build relationships and communicate effectively with their team members. Also, an organizational culture that values emotional intelligence and promotes its development among leaders can facilitate the growth of emotional intelligence. They also share the views that Training and development in a way improves on emotional intelligence. Providing training and development opportunities for leaders to improve their emotional intelligence can help overcome inhibiting factors and promote its growth. Accordingly, Gender biases can also play a role in inhibiting the development of emotional intelligence in leaders. For example, women are often expected to be more emotionally intelligent than men, which can create unrealistic expectations and hinder their growth (Rosenbusch, Grégoire, & Perrigot, 2018).

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Strategies for Developing Emotional Intelligence in Leaders

According to Osland and Bird (2019), Strategies for developing emotional intelligence in leaders are as follows:

Assess current emotional intelligence levels: Start by assessing the current level of emotional intelligence among leaders through surveys, assessments or feedback from peers and team members.

Provide training and coaching: Provide training and coaching sessions on emotional intelligence development using a mix of classroom instruction, role-playing exercises, and feedback from coaches or mentors. Leaders can develop their emotional intelligence by continuously learning and seeking feedback on their performance. They can attend training programs or workshops to develop their skills and knowledge.

Encourage self-reflection: Encourage leaders to reflect on their own emotions and how they impact their interactions with others, as well as their responses to diverse situations. Leaders can develop self-regulation by practicing mindfulness techniques, such as deep breathing or meditation, to manage their emotions. They can also learn to regulate their behavior and reactions by pausing and reflecting before responding to situations.

Build empathy skills: Leaders can develop empathy by actively listening to others and seeking to understand their perspectives. They can also try to put themselves in others' shoes and imagine how they might feel in a particular situation.

Promote emotional regulation techniques: Teach leaders techniques for managing their own emotions, such as taking deep breaths, meditating, or practicing mindfulness.

Foster positive work relationships: Leaders should cultivate positive and healthy work relationships with colleagues, subordinates, and stakeholders. Leaders can develop relationship management skills by building strong relationships and creating a positive and supportive work environment. They can also work on their communication skills and learn to give constructive feedback and manage conflicts effectively.

Set SMART goals: Set clear and specific emotional intelligence goals that are achievable and measurable using the SMART goal setting technique.

Provide ongoing support: Provide ongoing support, resources, and opportunities for leaders to practice and improve their emotional intelligence skills.

Theories of Emotional Intelligence

There are several theories of emotional intelligence that can be applied to conflict management. One such theory is the “**ability model of emotional intelligence**”, which proposes that emotional intelligence has four components: perceiving emotions, using emotions, understanding emotions, and managing emotions.

In conflict management, individuals with high emotional intelligence may be able to accurately perceive the emotions of others involved in the conflict and use this information to navigate the situation effectively. They may also be able to understand their own emotions and manage them in a way that promotes constructive communication and problem-solving.

Another theory that is relevant to conflict management is the “**trait model of emotional intelligence**”, which suggests that emotional intelligence is a stable personality trait that varies between individuals. According to this theory, individuals with high emotional intelligence may be more effective at managing conflicts because they have a greater ability to regulate their emotions and maintain positive relationships with others, even in challenging situations. Overall, these theories suggest that emotional intelligence plays an important role in conflict management by enabling individuals to perceive, understand, and manage emotions in themselves and others in a way that promotes positive outcomes.

Findings

Emotional intelligence is a critical component of effective conflict management and leadership in organizations. Research has shown that leaders who possess high levels of emotional intelligence are better equipped to handle conflict situations, foster positive relationships with employees, and ultimately achieve higher levels of organizational success. Studies have found that emotional intelligence is positively correlated with conflict management effectiveness. Leaders with high emotional intelligence are more likely to approach conflict as an opportunity to learn and grow,

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rather than a threat or challenge to be avoided. They are more skilled at managing their own emotions and those of others, which allows them to communicate effectively, build trust, and de-escalate tense situations.

Moreover, research has also established a link between emotional intelligence and leadership effectiveness. Leaders who are able to understand and manage their own emotions, as well as those of their subordinates, are more likely to inspire and motivate employees, foster strong team dynamics, and make better decisions. In summary, emotional intelligence plays a critical role in conflict management and leadership effectiveness in organizations. Leaders who possess high levels of emotional intelligence are better equipped to navigate complex interpersonal dynamics, build positive relationships with employees, and ultimately achieve greater success for the organization.

Conclusion

The importance of emotional intelligence in conflict management and leadership effectiveness cannot be overstated. Emotional intelligence refers to the ability to recognize, understand, and manage one's own emotions, as well as the emotions of others. In the context of conflict management, emotional intelligence allows leaders to better understand the perspectives and feelings of all parties involved, and to communicate effectively and empathetically. This helps to de-escalate tense situations and find mutually beneficial solutions.

In terms of leadership effectiveness, emotional intelligence allows leaders to build stronger relationships with their team members, foster a positive work environment, and effectively

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motivate and inspire their employees. Leaders who possess high levels of emotional intelligence are more likely to be perceived as trustworthy, caring, and approachable, which can lead to higher levels of job satisfaction and productivity among employees. Overall, organizations that prioritize emotional intelligence in their leaders and promote a culture of empathy, understanding, and open communication are more likely to experience positive outcomes such as reduced conflict, increased collaboration, and improved employee morale and retention.

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